the weekly
Standard

MARCH 24, 1997 $2.95

Why whites and blacks alike are so anxious to blame black America's problems on

WHITE RACISM

Robert Weissberg • Elena Neuman

How to Be a Clergyman Media Star
MATT LABASH • TUCKER CARLSON

Kissing Off Kathryn Harrison
MARY EBERSTADT

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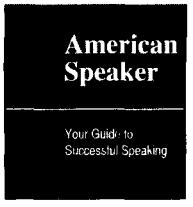
R E V I E W

Applause, Applause

Anyone can win over a tough audience, says hailed speechwriter. Just ask Lee Iacocca.



THE AMERICAN SPEAKER
Your Guide to Successful Speaking
Aram Bakshian, Jr., Editor (600 pages; Georgetown Publishing House)

By Len Taylor

The difference between success and failure, writes Aram Bakshian, Jr., in this remarkable new resource for public speakers, is the ability to communicate clearly and effectively. Never has this been more true than in today's intensely competitive business climate.

Bakshian should know. Speechwriter to "The Great Communicator" himself, Ronald Reagan, as well as to two other former presidents and the heads of several major corporations, Bakshian has witnessed the rise and fall of international leaders based on their ease — or lack of ease — on the podium. Anyone can master the art of speaking in public, Bakshian says, "In the last analysis, the spoken word is still king."

Fear and loathing of the rubber chicken circuit have long plagued public figures. "No one knows how I hate making speeches," President Calvin Coolidge once complained to a friend.

Bakshian tackles head-on the challenges of public speaking in AMERICAN SPEAKER. "As with alcoholism," he writes, "there is no known cure for stage fright. You're either a 'chronic' sufferer or a 'recovering' sufferer." In either case, it's easy to minimize that suffering — or even turn it into an advantage. As Carroll O'Connor, the legendary "Archie Bunker," put it, "A professional actor has a kind of tension. The amateur is thrown by it, but the professional needs it."

The chairmen of Fortune 500 companies like Coca-Cola, IBM and General Motors make more speeches in a year than most politicians do. And not just on television. They speak all the time in the workplace and to colleagues, customers and the media.

Perhaps the best contemporary example is Lee Iacocca, who saved the Chrysler Corporation by using his enormous talent as a speaker to win the support of the Congress, the White House and the American people for the biggest corporate bailout in history. Iacocca himself attributes his business success to speaking. In his autobiography, he writes: "I've seen a lot of guys who are smarter than I am and a lot who know more about cars. And yet I've lost them in the smoke. Why? Because I'm tough? No ... You've got to know how to talk to them, plain and simple."

Business is the single biggest rhetorical arena. From simple retail sales spiels to sensitive boardroom presentations, speech keeps the wheels of commerce turning. In making a first impression, Bakshian writes, "Your appearance can raise expectations, but what you say and how you say it will determine how people evaluate you." A good speaker is always in demand. At events from business conventions to weddings, "a good speaker not only adds to the occasion, he also benefits from 'free advertising' that adds to his stature in the community and attracts future business."

Unusual for a book or periodical of any kind, AMERICAN SPEAKER is more of a personal mentor — a do-it-yourself guide designed to save hours or days of preparation time, or, conversely, an enormous bill from a professional speechwriter or "coach."

It's a clever, accessible concept: a three-ring binder crammed with hundreds of pages of material on every imaginable aspect of public address: body language, delivering an inspiring eulogy, antidotes to nervousness, using humor, developing a powerful speaking voice, or engaging the audience in a positive question-and-answer session. Bakshian offers sensible, uplifting advice for every occasion, from the Thanksgiving toast to a defense of your industry before a hostile audience.

Arranged alphabetically, AMERICAN SPEAKER is easy to navigate, highly entertaining and loaded with good ideas. In the calendars section, for instance, Bakshian compiles thousands of speech pegs for every day of the year in three calendars: celebrity birthdays, today in history and the months at a glance. "Every audience gathered to share a common interest or celebrate a specific occasion has a built-in common bond," Bakshian writes. "A good speaker doesn't just know this; a good speaker takes advantage of it." He demonstrates how a shared reference can warm up the audience, draw a favorable analogy or build a bridge from past to present.

What about actual speeches? They're all over AMERICAN SPEAKER. A section on acceptance speeches includes as an example Winston Churchill's masterful appearance before Parliament in 1954, on the occasion of his 80th birthday. To illustrate the business address, Bakshian quotes nine speeches that used humor and anecdotes to deliver serious messages to several very different audiences. In the education section, Bakshian shows how cartoonist Garry Trudeau hilariously defused the "political correctness" time bomb in speaking to a graduating class at Yale University. And so on.

But here's what really makes AMERICAN SPEAKER stand out from the crowd of business publications. In addition to the basic 600-page volume, readers also receive timely updates, transcripts of recent, powerful speeches and a free consulting service with Bakshian, to resolve those last-minute speaking challenges. Best of all, the entire package is guaranteed. Review AMERICAN SPEAKER for 30 days. If it doesn't meet your expectations, return it to Georgetown Publishing House for a complete refund.

Few professionals can afford to ignore a promise like that AMERICAN SPEAKER ($297, including bimonthly updates) is not available in any bookstore. Copies are available only from Georgetown Publishing House.

To order, write to: Georgetown Publishing House, 1101 30th St., NW, Dept. 4HHC7, Washington, DC 20007. Or call them at 800-915-0022 — or, fax 202-337-1512. ■

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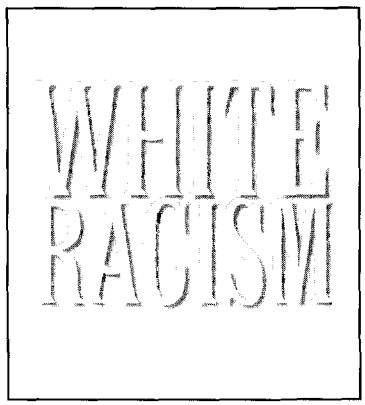

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Ante-ing up for Newt

House speaker Newt Gingrich doesn't want to pay the $300,000 fine levied on him by the ethics committee out of his own pocket. His wife, Marianne, feels even more strongly that the fine shouldn't be paid out of *their* wallets. House GOP whip Tom DeLay adds, "I think it would be awful if he paid it out of his own funds. Number one, he doesn't have the money."

The problem, of course, is the firestorm that will erupt if Gingrich uses campaign dollars to pay it or conducts a special fund-raising drive. So, with an eye to avoiding a blowup, a new scheme has been concocted to pay the fine: Each of the 227 Republican House members would chip in to cover the $300,000. Backbenchers would pony up $1,000 apiece, committee chairmen $5,000, and members of the leadership as much as $10,000.

"This would solve all the problems," says a Republican who favors the scheme. "And it's an incredible sign of support for this speaker. How can any criticism be taken when the members are saying to the world, 'Newt should not be carrying this burden by himself?' If Newt paid out of his campaign funds, the criticism would have legs. But not if members do it."

Alas, there are still problems, or at least hurdles. Some members don't like the idea. "Crackpot," one member of the House GOP leadership says. Then, Newt's pals have to get Rep. Nancy Johnson of Connecticut, who chaired the ethics committee during Newt's case, to go along. She hasn't yet. And Republican moderates like Chris Shays of Connecticut and Gingrich-bashers such as Peter King of New York might rebel. Also, there are reporters, who hate Gingrich, and Democrats, who hate Gingrich.

All that's needed for the plan to work is for 200 Republicans to pitch in, a friend of Gingrich said. And there's plenty of time to collect the money. The ethics committee hasn't set a timetable on when Gingrich must pay. For his part, Gingrich is in no hurry to hand over the money.

1-800-Rat-on-the-Left

In a heartening display of civic-mindedness, dozens of Scrapbook readers responded to our invitation for tips on which charitable and tax-exempt organizations they think should be audit bait for the IRS. The idea comes from the IRS itself, which last month said that its audits of tax-exempt groups are sometimes prompted by news reports on the groups' political activities. The IRS commissioner has since assured the chairmen of the relevant House and Senate oversight committees that the IRS does *not* engage in politically motivated audits. We hope not. And frankly, we have never really believed that politics motivates auditors—they just think it's fun to watch people sweat.

Judging by the mail we received, many of the readers of this page (you know who you are) agree. Particularly impressive was your willingness to give expansive definitions to the key terms of art, "audit" and "tax-exempt." Like many Americans, you are not always confident of the fine points of the law, but there are people you want to go after, and you're sure some piece of the tax code can be used against them.

The most striking lead came from an anonymous tipster who sent glossy color photographs of the van of the **Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church** in Omaha, bearing the license plate "Nebraska 7531 Tax Exempt" and ferrying voters to the polls. And not Republican voters, either, as far as we can tell. Actually, all you can see printed on the van is "Moriah Mis—ary B——hurch"; everything else is obscured by the "Clinton Gore 96," "Nelson U.S. Senate," and other Democratic posters plastered on the sides of the van. Another anonymous tipster, probably from the Ford Foundation, simply mailed in the relevant page of the Scrapbook, scrawling on it, "**Pew Charitable Trusts**."

Popular nominees included the **American Association of Retired Persons**, **Planned Parenthood**, the **American Bar Association**, and the **American Civil Liberties Union**. But leading the pack was the **Sierra Club**. Recommendations to audit it—not accompanied by glossy color photographs, alas—came from Cheryl Dempsey, Mike Heatwole, James C. Longford, Charles Muth, John M. Parker, Dennis P. Quinn, and Virginia Randall, among others.

The **Children's Defense Fund** ran a close second in the audit sweeps. Margaret E. Morell wrote: "Information on its web site often speaks on behalf of Democratic legislation. The June 1, 1996, 'Stand for Children' march was a particularly partisan activity. What ticks me off the most is that the minister of my church jumped wholeheartedly into 'Stand for

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Scrapbook

Children,' going off to Washington, D.C., to participate as well as printing CDF propaganda in our newsletter. A *Los Angeles Times* article said that 'Marian Wright Edelman capped off the event with a rip-roaring and *decidedly partisan speech*'" [emphasis by Margaret, who adds: "If I sound a bit rabid, it's because I am"].

No, Margaret, just commendably zealous, like many of our correspondents. Come the insurrection, we will be needing some, ahem, auditors, and we no longer have any doubts about filling the slots.

Laundering at the White House

The Clinton administration is asking Congress to appropriate $200,000 for a new laundry facility. Normally, that wouldn't be news. But since it's come to light that the White House was being operated as a full-service bed-and-breakfast, is it possible the new facility is needed to keep the sheets cleaned and pressed for all those Lincoln Bedroom guests? The *Washington Times* reported last week that Rep. Jim Kolbe, who chairs an appropriations subcommittee, has asked for an explanation, only to be informed by the White House counsel's office that no White House official would be willing to testify on the need for the new facility, only a representative of the National Park Service, whose budget includes the payments for the executive residence. Kolbe has also discovered there's been a 119 percent increase in overtime pay for the White House social staff since the Clintons arrived in Washington four years ago. This could be the biggest scandal since it was revealed Clinton took a tax-deduction for donating his old underwear to charity.

Sid Vicious

You have to give the *New Yorker* credit for not assigning its review of the new biography of Whittaker Chambers to the last person it had writing about the Hiss-Chambers case: Tony Hiss, son of Alger. But it did the next best thing and got Sidney Blumenthal, a writer who embarrassed the magazine with his slavish coverage of the Clintons and has now embarrassed his parents, his English-composition teachers, and any human being with a brain in his head with an astoundingly witless and tortuous piece of writing that suggests, among other things, that "the evolution of Cold War conservatism" was basically the result of homosexual panic.

Here's the crux of Blumenthal's piece: Chambers was gay. The end. Really.

Oh, and he also argues that "the focus of the mystery is no longer whether, as Chambers charged in 1948, Hiss was a Communist and a spy in the 1930s. On that question, the room for reasonable doubt continues to shrink." Let us repeat that last phrase: "The room for reasonable doubt continues to shrink." Even now—even now—that Soviet archives leave no possible question as to Hiss's guilt, a leftist like Blumenthal cannot actually use the words "spy," "guilt," and "Alger Hiss" in a single sentence. Could this have anything to do with Leslie Fiedler's brilliant observation that when the Rosenbergs protested their innocence, they believed it not because they had never spied but because they had—because they thought spying for the Soviet Union was noble? Could it be that Sidney Blumenthal sort of believes this too?

Maybe. But there is another explanation: Maybe he's just a fool. Hard to know which of the two Blumenthal would prefer.

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Casual

Reread It and Weep

The other day I came across the outline of a book I once tried to write. It was going to be titled *New Columbia: A Book on D.C. Statehood*. My co-author and I were excited about the idea, and our earnest enthusiasm showed in the pitch we sent to publishers. "The creation of a 51st state," we wrote, "is a question that could have important national consequences." Plus, as we pointed out, "no book has yet been written on it." One of our eye-grabbing chapters would have taken a "closer look at H.R. 4718," the New Columbia Admission Bill.

New Columbia didn't get far—the foundation we had hoped would fund it didn't; our would-be literary agent never even called us back—and rereading the proposal five years later, I understood why: It was a terrible idea. The premise was yawn-inducing. Flipping through the yellowing chapter summaries I felt vaguely sick to my stomach, the way you do looking at dirty plates after a heavy meal. Like dinner, prose can be pretty unappetizing if you have to face it afterwards.

And I've had to face it repeatedly. The problem with writing, as every writer discovers, is that it doesn't go away. It lurks in file folders, sits at the back of desk drawers, floats around in Nexis waiting to be rediscovered and embarrass you. A couple of years ago, just to be mean, my wife dug out a handbill I'd written in tenth grade to protest the expulsion of a classmate from school. I only dimly remember him now, though I'm pretty sure he was your standard slope-shouldered, dope-smoking, arrogant little creep friend of mine who'd probably been booted for doing something horrible. I signed the flyer anonymously, as "A Concerned Student," and it's a good thing, since it was filled with the most obvious kinds of spelling mistake, not to mention a lot of exclamation points. The word "outrageous" was used in every one of its grammatical forms. And just in case readers missed the general tone of moral indignation, I tipped them off with the headline: "The Bell of Injustice Tolls."

Pretty bad, even for a 15-year-old. Not as appalling, though, as some of the things I wrote when I got older. I made it through four years of college, for instance, using a total of only two opening phrases. "In many ways, . . ." began the first one. "In considering [name of book, philosopher, or modern feminist poet here], one must ask oneself the question. . . ," began the second. Even college professors catch on to this kind of thing after a while, and my papers were routinely returned with "Huh?" and "Explain" jotted in the margins. "The triple-spacing doesn't work," wrote one particularly savvy philosophy instructor. "Try writing more."

Happily, thanks to a series of kindly editors, most of the really embarrassing things I've written have never seen print. I have a whole file full of these masterpieces labeled "Spiked." Sometimes I go through it just to remind myself of what can happen when a writer loses perspective. Like the piece I once wrote arguing that child-proof cigarette lighters were the biggest threat to American liberty since the Comintern. Or the essay in which I called on the federal government to issue every American woman a concealed-weapons permit. That one came back with only one query: "Is this a joke?" I tried to pretend it was.

In 1994, while working as an editorial writer at a southern newspaper, I read that Rep. John Dingell of Michigan was planning to hold hearings into the famous "Harry and Louise" television ads on the grounds that they mischaracterized the Clinton health-care plan. Seemed like an outrageous assault on the First Amendment to me. So I wrote a jingle to denounce him: "Dingell bells, Dingell bells/John Dingell wears red tights./Tough luck for him/because we're protected/by the Bill of Rights." That was about it, the extent of my editorial, the newspaper's official position on this great question of the day. Or at least it would have been the newspaper's official position, had my editor let it run. He returned it with "SEE ME" written in angry red pen across the top of the page.

It was around this time that an old reporter I shared an office with came in and caught me smugly reading a piece I'd written for that day's paper. "Yep," he said, peering over his glasses, "that thing's probably sitting at the bottom of a lot of bird cages by now. Covered in canary crap." At the time, it seemed like a mean thing to say. Now I realize it should have made me feel better.

Tucker Carlson

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IN 1996, LOCAL PHONE COMPANY ACCESS CHARGES COST THE BAKER FAMILY $110. OR 4 PIANO LESSONS. OR 2 PAIRS OF SNEAKERS. OR GROCERIES FOR A WEEK.

A staggering 40¢ of every dollar you spend on long distance goes to your local phone monopoly to cover the cost of beginning and ending your calls. Not the 5¢ it really costs, but a hefty 40¢.

They call this an access charge. We call this an overcharge. Over time their access charges really add up. Last year alone, the local phone monopolies skimmed $14 billion from Americans. But you have the power to stop the access charge rip-off. If enough people speak out, the Big Bell monopolies will no longer be able to continue their mutibillion dollar rip-off. Then, and only then, can you spend the money they take on something important...like your family.

END THE BIG BELL MONOPOLIES' ACCESS CHARGE RIP-OFF.

Source: Telecommunications Industry Revenue, FCC, December 1996 and Hatfield Associates.

.overcharge.com

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Correspondence

You Say You Want an Insurrection?

William Kristol's "Time for an Insurrection" (Mar. 10) does not go far enough. The Republicans aren't brain dead, it's much worse than that. The Republicans have become part of the inside-the-Beltway problem. They now have the reins of power, and that is more important to them than downsizing the government or restoring the authority of the Constitution. It's taken barely two years in Washington to turn a band of revolutionaries into a meek, beaten, embarrassed bunch of career politicians whose sole purpose is to protect taxes, spending, and regulation.

I have no intention of ever voting for this hapless bunch again. I'm a conservative. How I wish there were a party in America that represented me.

HOWARD IVES
ROCHESTER, MN

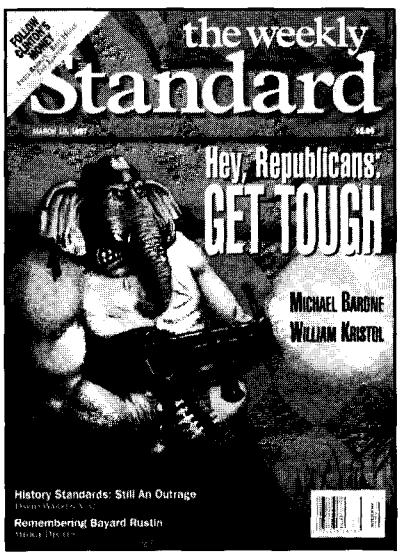
About a year ago, William Kristol declared that Republicans belong with the lords and barons. Now he hints that he prefers the opposite. This is not to say that he no longer finds populism off-putting, but heavens! William Kristol calling for "insurrection" against the leadership! This is a fairly good imitation of a move away from the lords and barons and towards us pitchfork-wielding populists.

Welcome to the cause, Mr. Kristol. Until now I wondered whether you were actually a liberal mole. I had become convinced that 60 new Democrats are registered for every minute that you spread your anti-populist message on ABC News and PBS. But your remarks in "Time for an Insurrection" are not so distant from ruminations I put in an open letter to congresswoman Nancy Johnson on March 2, 1995. "Since November 8, Democrats have compared Republicans to Nazis, and Democrats and media celebrities regularly denounce Republicans as mean-spirited and as extremist. And the Republican response, generally, is to continue work on the Contract with America. It is time that Republicans either added a 'right of self-defense' clause in the contract, or made way for a new political party that will represent the struggling class based on the Madisonian principles on democracy found in the Federalist Papers."

To find Kristol now talking of GOP "passivity and timidity" gives me a sense of personal vindication. I would have preferred to see the GOP stand with the people during the past two years rather than mill about so very aimlessly.

DAVID R. ZUKERMAN
BRONX, NY

"Whipped dogs," "hunkered down," "passive," "cautious," "timid," "adrift"—these are the terms that William Kristol and Michael Barone aptly apply to the behavior of the Republican party in the 105th Congress. With the possible exception of



the now-failed balanced-budget amendment, this party's agenda consists of a tepid broth of a dozen or so disjointed initiatives, not the bold, cohesive vision that brought them to power in 1994.

Gone is the talk of eliminating entire federal programs and agencies, protecting the citizen's property, and changing the tax structure. Absent too are serious initiatives to cut billions in corporate welfare and the myriad left-wing political groups nourished by the federal government. Also lacking is the restoration of our military after continuous assaults by the Clinton administration.

Equally dispiriting is the apparent unwillingness of the Republican leadership to confront aggressively the outrages of the other party. Where is the court action against the cell-phone eavesdropping Florida couple and the censure of their willing accomplices in the House? Why did the House and Senate seat Democrats whose elections were steeped in obvious fraud? Where is the challenge to Sen. Christopher Dodd's serving on a committee to investigate his own DNC? Is the Senate really prepared to block Clinton's activist appointments to the federal bench when, in order to confirm a newly appointed U.S. trade representative, it had to waive criteria in existing law? And does the House speaker understand the difference between dialogue and showcasing when it comes to dealing with the likes of Jesse Jackson?

PAUL M. VETTERICK
BEAVERTON, OR

Your plea for the Republicans to "get tough" is poorly timed. Political parties must balance the Burkean ideal of vigorous commitment to ideology with the Clintonian ideal of winning at all costs.

This balance is complicated in our system, which demands either full control of the government or a demonstrable public consensus to effect major change. There is no clear consensus on the really tough issues. And we do not have the presidency or a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate.

What we do have is a midterm election in 1998 that promises Republican gains and a presidential election in 2000 without an incumbent. If Republicans win big in 1998, we would be one election away from achieving the kind of partisan control of our government necessary for major change.

If the Republicans blow the 1998 elections by giving the Democrats effective campaign issues, they will prevent that new era from beginning in 2001. With a big win in 1998, they can become more aggressive.

For the next year and a half, let's pick our issues carefully—no school-lunch or education cuts and no cuts in elderly entitlements unless the president leads. Leave environmental regulations alone until the next election. Let's call the president's bluff on tax cuts. And let's see if the president is serious this time about a balanced budget.

STEPHEN K. CARTER, JR.
TOLLAND, CT

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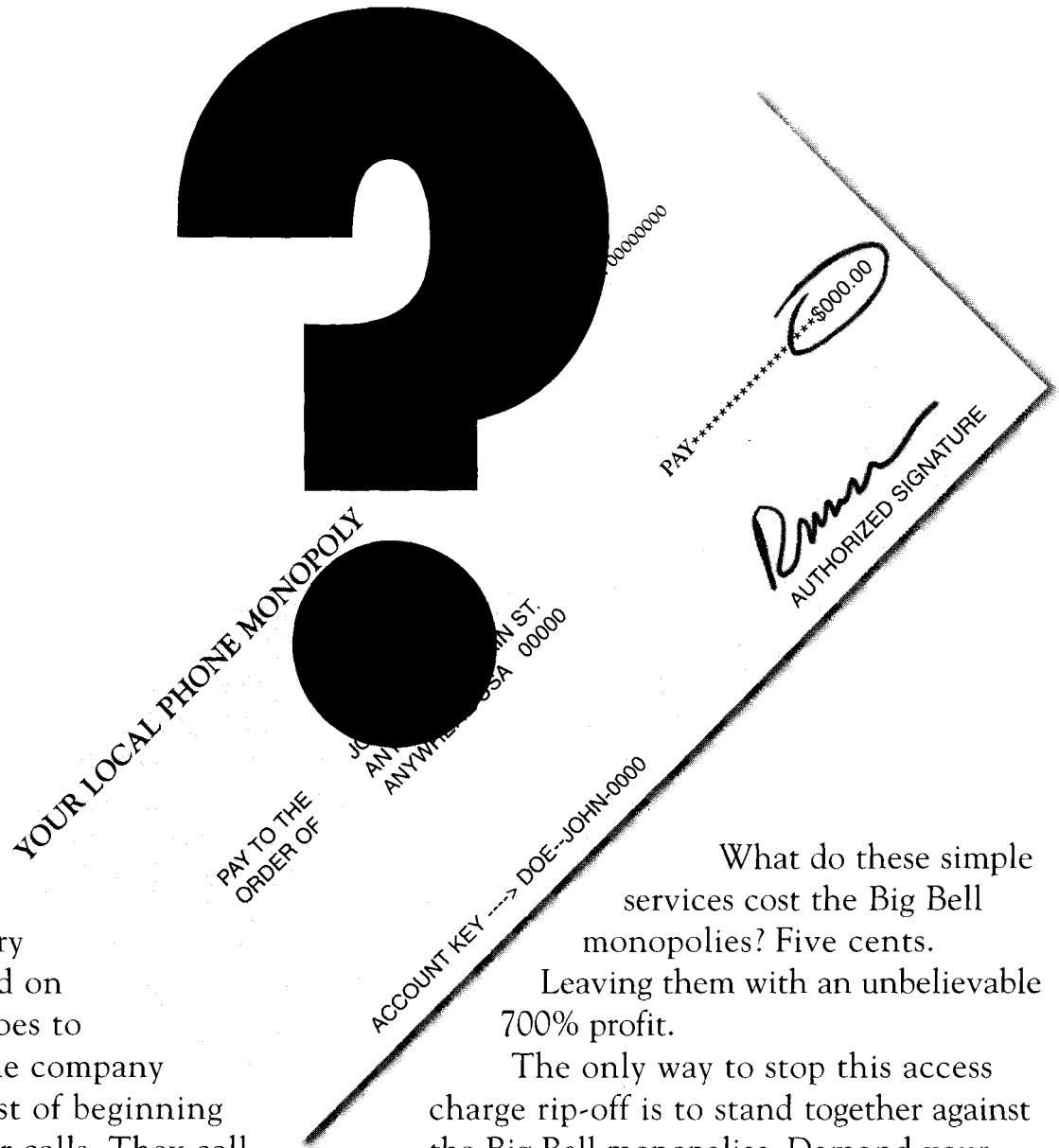
IN 1996 THE LOCAL PHONE MONOPOLIES OVERCHARGED YOU $14 BILLION IN ACCESS FEES. BUT YOUR REFUND CHECK ISN'T IN THE MAIL.



The FCC recently stated that 40¢ of every dollar you spend on long distance goes to your local phone company to cover the cost of beginning and ending your calls. They call this an access charge. We call this an overcharge.

What do these simple services cost the Big Bell monopolies? Five cents. Leaving them with an unbelievable 700% profit.

The only way to stop this access charge rip-off is to stand together against the Big Bell monopolies. Demand your money back. Demand an end to unfair access charges.

END THE BIG BELL MONOPOLIES' ACCESS CHARGE RIP-OFF.

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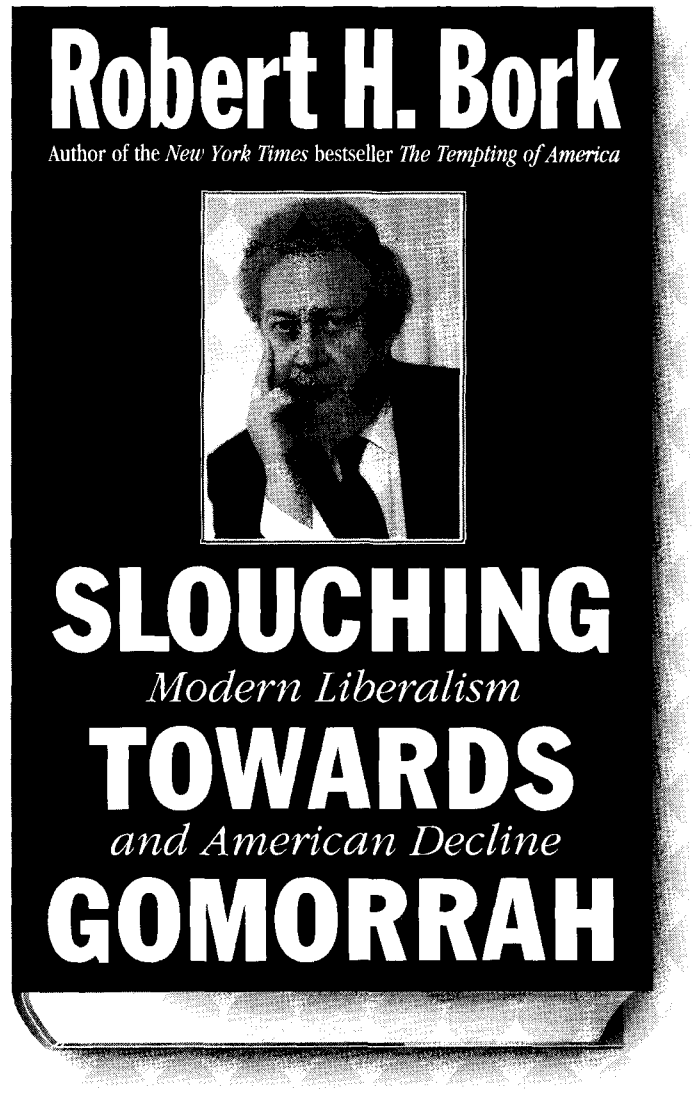
Author of



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the weekly Standard

Just Say No to a Bad Treaty

The United States Senate must decide by April 28 whether to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. The press, the pundits, and the Clinton administration have treated the debate over the treaty as another in a series of battles between "internationalists" and "isolationists" in the new, post-Cold War era.

It isn't. What we really have here is the continuation of one of this century's most enduring disputes. In the first camp are the high priests of arms control theology, who have never met an international agreement they didn't like. In the second camp are those who take a more skeptical view of relying on a piece of watermarked, signed parchment for safety in a dangerous world.

The case for ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention is a triumph of hope over experience. It is an attempt to reform the world by collecting signatures. Some of the most dangerous nations—Iraq, Syria, Libya, and North Korea—have not ratified the convention and, for all we know, never will. Some of the nations that *are* signatories, like Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba, are manifestly unreliable and are already looking for ways to circumvent the convention's provisions.

The convention's most prominent American defenders admit that the agreement is probably not verifiable. And it isn't. Chemical weapons can be produced in small but deadly amounts in tiny makeshift laboratories. The nerve gas used by terrorists to poison subway riders in Japan in 1995, for instance, was produced in a 14 ft.-by-8 ft. room. No one in the American intelligence community believes we would be able to monitor compliance with an international chemical weapons regime with any reasonable degree of confidence.

The *Washington Post* opines that these failings in the convention—the very fact "that the coverage of this treaty falls short and that enforcement is uncertain"—are actually arguments *for* ratifying it. Presumably, signature of a flawed treaty will make all of us work harder to perfect it.

Great.

At the end of the day, the strongest argument proponents of ratification can offer is that, whatever a treaty's manifest flaws, it is better to have one than not to have one. How could it be bad to have a treaty outlawing production of chemical weapons, no matter how full of holes it may be?

Well, actually, such a treaty could be worse than no treaty at all. We have pretty good evidence from the bloody history of this century that treaties like the Chemical Weapons Convention—treaties that are more hortatory than mandatory, that express good intentions more than they require any actions to back up those intentions—can do more harm than good. They are part of a psychological process of evasion and avoidance of tough choices. The truth is, the best way of controlling chemical weapons proliferation could be for the United States to bomb a Libyan chemical weapons factory.

But that is the kind of difficult decision for an American president that the Chemical Weapons Convention does nothing to facilitate. Indeed, the existence of a chemical weapons treaty would make it *less* likely that a president would order such strong unilateral action, since he would be bound to turn over evidence of a violation to the international lawyers and diplomats and wait for their investigation and concurrence. And as Richard Perle has recently noted, even after Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons in flagrant violation of an *existing* prohibition against their use, the international bureaucrats responsible for monitoring these matters could not bring themselves to denounce Iraq by name. In the end, it would be easier for a president to order an airstrike than to get scores of nations to agree on naming one of their own an outlaw.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is what Peter Rodman calls "junk arms control," and not the least of its many drawbacks is that it gives effective arms control a bad name. Effective treaties codify decisions nations have *already* made: to end a war on certain terms, for instance, or to define fishing rights. Because they reflect the will of the parties, moreover, the parties themselves don't raise obstacles to verification.

But treaties whose purpose is to rope in rogue nations that have not consented, or whose consent is widely understood to be cynical and disingenuous, are something else again. They are based on a worldview that is at best foolishly optimistic and at worst patronizing and deluded.

One of the important things separating Reaganite internationalism from the more starry-eyed Wilsonian version is the understanding that treaties must reflect reality, not hope. The Chemical Weapons Convention turns the clock back to the kind of Wilsonian thinking characteristic of the Carter administration. It is unfortunate that among its strongest backers are some prominent Republicans who have served in key foreign-policy posi-

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tions. It is true that the origins of the Chemical Weapons Convention date back to the Reagan years, and the convention was carried to fruition by the Bush administration. But let's be candid. In the Reagan years, the treaty was mostly a sop to liberals in Congress, an attempt to pick up some points for an arms control measure at a time when Reagan was trying to win on more important issues like the defense buildup and the Strategic Defense Initiative. And President Bush pushed the treaty in no small part because he had disliked having to cast a tie-breaking vote in the Senate as vice president in favor of building chemical weapons. Republicans today are under no obligation to carry out the mistakes of their predecessors.

In one respect, the debate over the Chemical Weapons Convention calls to mind the struggle for the party's soul waged in the 1970s between Kissingerian détente-niks on one side and the insurgent forces led by Ronald Reagan on the other. Back then, conservative Republicans like Senate majority leader Trent Lott knew without hesitation where they stood. They should stand where they stood before, foursquare with the ideas that helped win the Cold War, and against the Chemical Weapons Convention. ♦

Blame Israel First—Again

In 1969, the United States decided it was going to "comprehensively solve" the Middle East. Ever since, American officials have dreamed that they might be able to find the solution of all solutions, the key to amity in and around the world's holy sites, and a ticket to Norway for the Nobel ceremonies. At times, it is difficult to know which of the three vanities expressed in this dream of Middle East concord is the worst: the intellectual, the sentimental, or the glory-hungry. For the desire to "solve" the Middle East always ends up meaning this: making demands on Israel. And that in turn means that every time Israel lifts a pinky in pursuit of its own interests, or the Israeli government tries to satisfy the wishes of its own electorate, Israel is accused of threatening the "peace process" (and jeopardizing that Norway trip).

The Clinton administration has so far been relatively

Another Thrilling Edition of: Clinton Scandal Watch!

Clinton scandal stories have been breaking so fast—and so often, sometimes two and three of them on each day's front pages—that we're frankly having trouble keeping track of them all. And we get *paid* to do it. So we figure our readers could certainly use a helpful crib sheet. Here, then, is a quick day-by-day rundown on the most intense few days of presidential-sleaze revelations in more than 20 years. Keep in mind, if Bill Clinton were a normal president, any one of these stories would be considered a major big deal. At this rate, who knows what we'll be summarizing *next* week.

Wednesday, March 5. President Clinton insists he has "no reason to believe" the Chinese government has attempted to purchase influence with the Democratic party. After this remark, NBC News reports that the first lady's chief of staff, Maggie Williams, personally accepted a $50,000 campaign contribution from a Mr. Johnny Chung in 1995—on White House property, the same week Chung escorted a Chinese gunrunner and other Communist officials into the Oval Office.

Also, the vice president's office acknowledges that Al Gore "misspoke" two days earlier when he said he'd made White House fund-raising calls on a Democratic National Committee credit card. It was a Clinton-campaign credit card, the veep's men now say, a correction that blurs the distinction between sleazy Democratic fund-raising generally and sleazy fund-raising directly on behalf of the president.

Thursday, March 6. Newly installed Democratic party chairman Roy Romer says the White House maintained a special "bin" for fund-raising checks destined for the DNC. Then attorney general Janet Reno says the $50,000 check Maggie Williams deposited in this "bin" was actually *too big* to have violated the law. Sure, it's illegal to accept a *federal campaign contribution* on White House grounds. But donations like Johnny Chung's aren't meant for particular federal campaigns; they're "soft money," meant for national parties as a whole. Had Chung given Williams $50 instead of $50,000, Janet Reno would already be escorting her colleague to the clink.

Oh, yeah: The *New York Times* reports that a group of China-linked businesses and Lincoln Bedroom overnight guests gave former associate attorney general Webb Hubbell more than $400,000 before he started refusing to cooperate with the Whitewater criminal investigation.

Friday, March 7. President Clinton declines to say that he has "never" asked anyone for money in the White House. "I'm not sure, frankly," the president says. *Time* magazine

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free of this particular kind of Israel-bashing—in part because for most of its time in Washington, the administration was dealing with a Labor party government in Jerusalem with its own special thirst for Norway. No longer. Now, Bill Clinton has stood man to man with Yasser Arafat and taken the opportunity publicly to criticize the nation of Israel for building some apartments in Jerusalem.

The president's words were a mistake, and we don't mean merely because we disagree with the president on the specifics of the Har Homa construction. The criticism he offered emboldened world opinion to indulge in the kind of free-for-all that greeted almost every Israeli action in the 1970s. The 6,500 Har Homa apartments have been the subject of a U.N. Security Council resolution the United States then had to veto. The king of Jordan, whose love of peace in the Middle East is so great that he backed Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War, wrote a strong private letter to the prime minister of Israel that somehow made it onto the front pages of the world's newspapers.

All this does nobody any good but Arafat, who has seized this opportunity to put pressure on Israel from outside the Oslo accords, by which the Jewish state is abiding with admirable gravity.

Let us be clear why the president was so unjust to Israel. In the last few months, the Likud government in Israel fulfilled its treaty obligations by redeploying its troops in and around the West Bank city of Hebron. Subsequently, it has agreed to triple the amount of West Bank land under Palestinian control. The Likud government did both these things even though it did not want to, even though it did not believe it was compelled to, given the questionable intentions and behavior of its negotiating partner, the Palestinian Authority. The Likud government did both these things even though it won an election, fair and square, based on the precept that the previous government had been imprudent in its rush to accommodate the Palestinians. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has incurred the wrath of his own electoral base because he has been responsible enough to accept the hand he was dealt by his predecessors.

But this, it seems, avails Netanyahu nothing when it comes to building some apartments in East Jerusalem. Netanyahu does not believe that, in the future, East Jerusalem should be *Judenrein*, free of Jews. Does the United States? Surely not.

For surely even dreamers understand that there can be no "comprehensive solution" to the Middle East with a redivided Jerusalem. ♦

reports that after the president's press conference, a White House aide admitted Clinton had asked visiting donors for "support"—and that another Clinton "associate" conceded the president had "pitched for funds" by telephone.

Saturday, March 8. The *Boston Globe* reports that major Democratic contributors have been rewarded with joyrides on Air Force One.

Sunday, March 9. The *Washington Post* reports that at least six members of Congress, including Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein of California, were warned by the FBI in 1996 that they had been "targeted" by China for "illegal campaign contributions." Government investigators believe there is "conclusive evidence" and "no question" that Chinese funds were "laundered" into U.S. elections last year, according to the *Post*. Why, then, didn't the White House know about all this? Doesn't the FBI work for the president of the United States?

Monday, March 10. It seems the FBI *did* alert the White House last year, through staffers at the National Security Council, about its concerns over illegal Chinese influence-peddling in federal elections. But White House aides complain that the president was kept in the dark about this NSC briefing—at the FBI's request.

Several hours after the president personally complains about this in a press conference, the FBI issues a press release flatly contradicting the White House. Several hours after *that*, Clinton press secretary Mike McCurry stiffly says the FBI is "in error."

Hillary Clinton tells reporters that Maggie Williams took Johnny Chung's $50,000 because she is an excessively "courteous person."

A number of newspapers report that two longtime Al Gore confidants helped shake down an impoverished Indian tribe in Oklahoma for consulting fees and more than $100,000 in contributions to the DNC in return for promised help with the administration in a land dispute.

Tuesday, March 11. Senior Justice Department officials tell reporters on background that Monday's FBI press release disputing the president's account of its 1996 heads-up on China was intemperate, hysterical, and out of bounds. Nevertheless, one of the two NSC staffers who attended the disputed FBI briefing suddenly retires—early—after 25 years of federal service.

Also: One of Webb Hubbell's sugar daddies (see Thursday, March 6, above) now says Hubbell *did* tell people at the White House about the $400,000 he received during his time of disgrace, the president perhaps among them. In response, Clinton spinmeister Lanny Davis informs reporters that the president "thinks that at some point he may have heard" that some "old friends" might be helping Hubbell out. Six weeks earlier, Clinton strongly implied that Hubbell's private financial arrangements were a complete mystery to him.

Wednesday, March 12. Attorney general Janet Reno tells a Senate appropriations subcommittee that the entire FBI/White House/China flap is merely a semantic "misunderstanding." No need for an independent-counsel investigation, here or anywhere else, she says.

Justice is supposed to be blind, but this is ridiculous.

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Newt Goes to China

by Fred Barnes

Newt Gingrich bristled last week when a visitor to his office told him how to handle the touchy issue of renewing most-favored-nation status for China. The visitor was Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council, who was there with 12 other people to brief Gingrich before his trip to China later this month. Bauer, who has come out against renewing MFN, said the speaker ought to let the Chinese know that it "isn't an easy vote anymore, because public opinion has changed."

Bauer told the speaker that China's poor human-rights record has made the issue a new focus of concern for Catholic bishops and evangelical Protestants, including the largest evangelical denomination, the Southern Baptists. "We're going to take note of who votes how," Bauer said, and he asked Gingrich for an assurance that there would be "honest" congressional hearings on the wisdom of renewing MFN.

Gingrich was dismissive. "Anybody can have hearings," he said; what's needed instead "is a long-term strategy."

Not really. For his visit to China, all Gingrich needs is a little boldness. If he is willing to be candid in public about Chinese shortcomings and American misgivings, his trip might have beneficial and immediate effects not only on U.S.-China relations, but on Gingrich himself.

A tough stance might lead to increased leverage for the United States in dealing with China on trade, human rights, arms proliferation, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and the persecution of Christians. And it might raise Gingrich's profile as a player in foreign policy.

Vice President Albert Gore is making a four-day visit to China that will end just as Gingrich arrives, and he is likely to stick to risk-free State Department talking points. That will leave Gingrich with an enormous opportunity. And he is perfectly positioned to seize it because he has standing with China when it comes to MFN. He was a strong backer of the trade measure last year, so much so that he pressured MFN critic Chris Cox, a Republican representative from California, to offer a toothless resolution on Chinese abuses and give up on staging a frontal assault against the trade measure.

But things have changed since last year's vote—China's aggressiveness toward Taiwan, its threats to Hong Kong's civil liberties, and evidence of Chinese interference in American elections. In addition, the State Department's new human-rights report notes that all political dissidents in China have been jailed, silenced, or exiled.

American officials have protested—privately. Secretary of state Madeleine Albright did so during her day in Beijing last month, and House whip Tom DeLay says Chinese leaders reacted frostily when he and other members of Congress "laid into" them during a visit last year.

These private complaints haven't done much. But even a mild public protest might produce a different result. In the speech he plans to give in Beijing, Gingrich could present himself honestly as an MFN supporter worried about its future. "I'm for MFN," he could say, "but there's rising opposition in the United States, especially in Congress. People are concerned about your treatment of Christians and dissidents, about Hong Kong, and about arms exports, including AK-47s that found their way to the United States. They're alarmed that China is also behaving as an aggressive power in Asia, which upsets the strategic balance." Finally, he could warn China's leaders that if Beijing doesn't start moving toward democracy, American opponents might block renewal of MFN (and deny China entry into the World Trade Organization as well).

The Chinese wouldn't be pleased by such a speech, but they couldn't dismiss it lightly with the MFN vote coming in June. The Clinton administration could exploit the Gingrich opening by arguing, reluctantly but truthfully, that the speaker is correct. There's trouble ahead on MFN, they could say, unless China cleans up its act. Clinton officials—and the president himself when he visits China later this year—could suggest that MFN's passage requires that Beijing release dissidents, preserve democracy in Hong Kong, curb arms proliferation, etc. To keep unfettered trade with the United States going full-tilt, which is China's top priority, China must make some changes—if only to accommodate anti-China hardliners with influence in Congress.

If things developed in this way, Gingrich would find himself with renewed status. And it wouldn't cost him a thing. The speaker wouldn't even have to flip-flop, since he doesn't have a clearly defined position on the broader question of how the United States should deal with China.

Nor does the Republican party, which is divided into two camps. The first camp believes that public criticism or sanctions won't produce any change in China, and that Chinese leaders should be accommodated as much as possible while China modernizes. Tom DeLay and David Dreier are the foremost exponents of this view in the House. The most surprising player in this camp is the Heritage Foundation, the

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Reaganite think tank considered an anti-Communist stronghold in the 1980s. In meetings with congressmen and senators, Heritage chief Edwin J. Feulner has forcefully expressed the opinion that MFN renewal should be Congress's top priority in 1997.

The second camp favors public chastisement of Chinese leaders and the levying of sanctions. These worked with the Soviet Union, they insist, and will change China as well. Chris Cox and Virginia's Frank Wolf are the most vocal members of this camp in the House (Democratic representative Nancy Pelosi is with them), and Jesse Helms holds the banner aloft in the Senate.

Gingrich straddles both camps. His foreign-policy aide, Gardner Peckham, is "of four or five minds about China, and so is Gingrich," says a Republican adviser. In July 1995, Gingrich said the United States should recognize the sovereignty of Taiwan and "tell the Chinese they would have to live with the reality that the people of Taiwan are a free people." That prompted Henry Kissinger, who was visiting Beijing at the time, to call Gingrich and lecture him on the one-China policy he helped frame in 1972. Gingrich changed his tune: "I was trying to rattle their cage, to get their attention," Gingrich said. "I don't think we should recognize Taiwan."

Kissinger later met several times with Gingrich to discuss foreign policy. But he appeared to lose interest in Gingrich when the speaker's clout in Washington waned. And Gingrich has not consistently toed the easy-on-China Kissinger line. Last year, Gingrich denounced Chinese missile tests off the coast of Taiwan as "an act of terrorism." He told Beijing's national security adviser that China will "pay a price" for bad behavior. And he's expressed the view that China has the potential for developing into a strategic threat to the United States.

In the meeting attended by Bauer, Gingrich didn't commit to anything. Several times, he ducked out for votes on the House floor. He seemed distracted. Once, he asked out of the blue, "Sanctions on China? What about sanctions on Burma?"

Even if Gingrich decides against confronting the Chinese, at least one member of his delegation, Chris Cox, probably will. But a Gingrich statement would have far more impact—on the Chinese, on the press, and on the Clinton administration.

What surprised Bauer was that the defense and foreign-policy experts around the table told Gingrich to take a firm line. For the United States to gain leverage, they told Gingrich, the Chinese must be warned that MFN is in trouble. The representative from the Heritage Foundation remained silent.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

IN THE NAME OF GOD . . .

by Tucker Carlson

THE REV. CARLTON VEAZEY is an abortion fanatic. The middle-aged Baptist preacher looks like someone you might see at an Operation Rescue protest. And indeed, Veazey has spent some time at rallies outside abortion clinics, though hardly on behalf of Operation Rescue. Veazey is part of a new strain of religious abortion zealots—the pro-choice ones. As acting director of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Veazey maintains that the right to abortion is protected not only by the Constitution, but by God. Legal abortion, he says solemnly, "is part of the basic tenet of our church."

Actually, in a strict sense, Carlton Veazey doesn't have a church. In the early 1980s, as pastor of the Zion Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., Veazey was photographed in a nude embrace with a woman who had come to him for "spiritual help." A scandal ensued and the woman killed herself by jumping out of the ninth-story window of her apartment building. Several years later, Veazey was fired by a vote of his congregation.

Veazey's firing made news in Washington, but that doesn't seem to bother the directors of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, an umbrella organization of pro-choice Protestant churches and Jewish denominations. Veazey is still an ordained minister, and that's what counts. After years of picking public fights with Bible-toting pro-lifers and being relegated to the moral low ground in arguments with the Catholic church, the pro-choice movement has decided to retaliate with religious rhetoric of its own.

From a PR standpoint, it's an inspired strategy. As a political issue, abortion may be divisive; as a medical procedure, it is disquieting and often gory. Elevate it to the level of a religious sacrament, however, and abortion becomes untouchable, a sacred expression of personal faith.

That faith was on display in February at a coalition-sponsored event at the Metropolitan AME

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Church in Washington. Billed as a "Faithful Witness for Choice," the gathering was a celebration of legal abortion, with all the trappings of a Sunday service. Ordained clergy offered blessings to doctors who perform abortions. Prayers in the liturgy gave thanks for "the pro-choice legacy of courage and commitment." The recessional hymn hailed the gift of "rightful choice." One of the "worship leaders" was the Rev. Katherine Ragsdale, an Episcopal priest from Boston and the longtime president of the coalition. To hear Ragsdale tell it, the coalition's religious orientation makes it uniquely qualified to weigh in on the subject of abortion. "We take decisions about abortion very seriously," she says, "because of course they involve how we handle the gift of life that is before us."

At the core of the religious debate over abortion is the question of whether fetuses have souls. Pro-life people say they do; pro-choice people say they don't. Carlton Veazey finds himself in both camps. According to Veazey, who has a divinity degree from Howard University, fetuses "who can survive outside the womb" have souls. And fetuses who can survive outside the womb but get aborted first? "I just don't think" they do, Veazey says. He and others at the coalition talk a lot about what a "profoundly complex ethical and moral decision" abortion is, but they don't seem to have pondered its profound complexities all that much.

Katherine Ragsdale seems equally baffled by basic questions about abortion. Asked to name a single instance in which abortion might be considered morally wrong, Ragsdale is struck silent. "Man, that's really hard to take that out of context," she says, finally. How about abortion for the purpose of sex selection? Or abortion performed at the end of the eighth month of pregnancy with no medical justification? Would she describe these as morally wrong? "Uh," she sighs, "let's see. No, I really can't."

Listen long enough to representatives of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and it becomes unclear what, exactly, religion has to do with the group's stand on abortion apart from being a handy rhetorical device. At a 1988 rally, Ragsdale referred to "the illegal and immoral activities of Operation Rescue" as "a blot on our nation's conscience. In the name of God, I call upon them to repent." Veazey, for his part, does not hesitate to employ religious language to describe abortion. "There are some instances with teens that *call out* for termination," he says in preacher's cadence.

Yet when it comes to anything deeper than sloganeering, the coalition's theologians come up embarrassingly short. Here's Carlton Veazey, for instance, on how his faith in God has informed his pro-choice position: "Well, I just believe that, that I don't, um, my conviction is based on that the person, the woman has that right based on her religious beliefs. I believe in a woman's right to choose to make that decision, and it's not shaped as far as the abortion itself because that's a whole other issue dealing with philosophical leanings and medical understanding."

Confused? A coalition tract helps shed some light on what religious pro-choice advocates believe. Entitled "Abortion: Finding Your Truth," the pamphlet describes the process of choosing abortion as a "gift of learning and growth," "an invitation for you to develop a larger vision of yourself and to practice compassion and loving kindness toward yourself." To celebrate her abortion, the faithful pro-choicer is advised to partake in "rituals" designed to "say goodbye to the pregnancy and send the spirit of that life on its way with love": "Light a candle. . . . Dance your feelings. . . .Take yourself for a walk. . . . Open your heart to yourself."

Other coalition literature warns religious people to be careful of the language they use when discussing abortion. "Labeling pregnant women 'mother' creates images of babies, again defining the decision to terminate a pregnancy as negative," cautions one section. "Abortion rights opponents consistently refer to a fetus as a 'baby,' 'unborn child,' or 'preborn.' The use of humanizing terms such as 'this little guy' is also encouraged." (How dare abortion-rights opponents use "humanizing terms.")

According to its last available tax statement, the coalition is not supported in any significant way by religious bodies. Instead, the bulk of its 1995 budget—about $400,000—came from private, secular trusts, such as the Ford Foundation. But then, church groups are not the focus of the coalition's efforts. Last year, the coalition released a statement in support of President Clinton's veto of the partial-birth-abortion ban. Signed by about 30 members of the group, mostly ministers and rabbis, the letter explained that "we, too, hold human life sacred, yet we respectfully disagree with this legislation."

The government, it went on to demand, "must not legislate and thus impose one religious view on all our citizens." The idea that restricting abortion in any way is an infringement on *religious* liberty has proved to be the coalition's most successful argument so far, the one most often repeated in the many news stories in which the group's spokesmen appear. Katherine Ragsdale finds it particularly compelling. The partial-birth-abortion ban, she explains, "infringes on religious freedom for Jews, who are required by Jewish law if necessary to preserve the life of the woman. That's back in the Mishnah, the most ancient of texts. It's always been an understood religious obligation."

The Mishnah is nowhere near "the most ancient of

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texts," and though it is true that the "life of the mother" exception to abortion is Talmudic doctrine, abortion is never deemed an "obligation." A number of Orthodox groups, including Agudath Israel, came out against partial-birth abortion last year.

Ragsdale doesn't dwell on such details. Instead, she moves on to the latest frontier in pro-choice public relations: getting the word out that abortionists are deeply religious people. "It just dawned on us that we've got to ask [abortion providers] to talk about the religious convictions that undergird their work," she says. "Because what we're finding overwhelmingly is that the people who do this kind of work are people who are in it because of deep moral convictions and religious roots. And we're asking them to talk about that." In the meantime, Ragsdale is busy making the point herself. At a 1993 "healing service" to commemorate the murder of Florida abortionist David Gunn, Ragsdale explained that Gunn had spent his life "busy doing the work God had given him to do."

God had directed Gunn to perform 30,000 abortions? Is the public ready for this kind of theology? Ragsdale seems sure it is. "Certainly the leadership of the more fundamentalist churches leads its people down the anti-choice path," she points out. It's time for the pro-choice movement to do the same. The task shouldn't be hard. "As a parish priest," says Ragsdale, "I'm constantly amazed by how willing people are to be led by their clergy."

Staff writer Tucker Carlson is also the author of this week's Casual, which appears on page 6.

Bill Milhous Clinton

by David Frum

Somewhere, Richard Nixon's shade is watching with admiration the performance of the Clinton White House. If only he'd run Watergate like this! Then he could have claimed that the break-in proved the need for tougher federal anti-burglary laws.

But while Nixon could have learned a great deal from Bill Clinton, Clinton could also learn a few lessons from the master of political chicanery. Perhaps the first lady could summon one of her psychic friends to bring the two scandal-plagued presidents together for a seance, because the president seems to be committing the same serious error that ultimately brought Nixon down.

Unnamed sources near the president told R.W. Apple of the *New York Times*, who reported their views in a gossipy backgrounder, that all of the commotion around the fund-raising scandal is an inside-the-Beltway tempest: Their polls show that the public at large doesn't really care. The trouble is, there's nothing so inside-the-Beltway as denying that scandals matter beyond-the-Beltway. No, the fund-raising scandals have not yet moved public opinion much. But President Nixon could tell you that public opinion is no bulwark for a politician caught violating the law.

The Watergate scandal began to gather momentum in the early spring of 1973. John Dean told his story to the Watergate special prosecutor in March, and Haldeman and Ehrlichman were forced to resign in April. As late as May, however, Gallup found that Nixon's approval rating remained in the 45 percent vicinity—roughly where President Clinton's stood through most of his first term.

Dean testified before the Senate in June, and in August the public learned of the president's secret tapes. But a September 1973 poll found that 50 percent of Americans still believed that Watergate was getting more attention than it deserved. On October 20, Nixon fired special prosecutor Archibald Cox, prompting the resignation of attorney general Elliot Richardson and an assistant attorney general. By then, three out of four Americans believed Nixon was guilty in the Watergate scandal. By a 54-37 percent margin, however, they still opposed removing him from office.

As late as January 1974, shortly after Nixon confessed to having known of payoffs to the Watergate burglars and having originally lied about it, more Americans opposed his removal from office than favored it. In fact, not until May of 1974—13 months after the first credible reports of presidential lawbreaking, by which time a previous Nixon attorney general had pled guilty and virtually the entire senior White House staff had been indicted—did more Americans favor removing Nixon from office than keeping him at his job.

The point? The public takes its cues on Washington scandals from the people it employs to pay close attention to affairs in Washington: the press, Congress, the Justice Department. When Washington collectively decides that serious lawbreaking has occurred, public opinion will follow. Public opinion is a lagging indicator: If the opposition is the prosecution and the press is the judge, the public is the jury. But once the press has decided that the president has committed a serious wrong—as the Washington press seems, grudg-

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ingly and unhappily, finally to be deciding about Bill Clinton—the public comes to believe it too.

The Watergate analogy holds only so far, of course. In Watergate, everybody knew what the crime was—breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters to wiretap the phones—but the degree of presidential responsibility remained unclear until the end. In the fund-raising story, the degree of presidential responsibility is clear—Clinton was in it up to his eyebrows—but the precise nature of the lawbreaking has not yet been fully revealed.

In Watergate, the underlying crime involved the violation of laws that everyone is familiar with: laws against burglary and illegal eavesdropping. As far as we yet know, the laws broken by the Democrats in their fund-raising campaign are complicated statutory and regulatory regimes.

There may be one other important difference as well: Republicans would be unwise to count on the Clinton scandals alone to deliver them future political victories like those won by the Democrats in 1974 and 1976. Watergate wasn't the only thing the Democrats had going for them in 1974 and 1976: Inflation was raging at 13 percent, the country was mired in the worst recession since 1940, motorists were queuing up for gasoline, and the country had just lost 58,000 soldiers in an unsuccessful war. What would have been Watergate's effect if the country had been peaceful and prosperous?

It's not entirely a hypothetical question. In 1923, the Republicans were hit by the first of this century's great scandals: Teapot Dome, the corrupt sale of oil from naval reserves in Wyoming and California. The secretary of the interior actually went to jail for corruption—he'd taken more than $400,000 in bribes. President Harding was guilty, at best, of gross negligence. Luckily for everyone, he died almost immediately afterward. The next year, Republican presidential nominee Calvin Coolidge won 54 percent of the vote, and the GOP retained control of both houses of Congress.

There aren't any free lunches in politics: Scandal or no scandal, the Republicans will have to earn back the White House and deliver legislative accomplishments to keep the Congress.

No matter how they end, the fund-raising scandals have been useful to the country in at least one way: They have finally helped us to understand the difference between an Old Democrat and the newfangled Bill Clinton version. An Old Democrat believes that when a 15-year-old from a broken home mugs an old lady, we should avoid condemning him and instead try to see his actions in context. A New Democrat wants to throw the 15-year-old in the slammer; it's only well-educated politicians who, when caught, should be permitted to offer the "How else was I to afford a new pair of Nikes?" excuse. A New Democrat believes that the poor and the ignorant must show personal responsibility; but for the infractions of the highest officeholder in the land, society is to blame.

Contributing editor David Frum also serves as a senior fellow of the Manhattan Institute.

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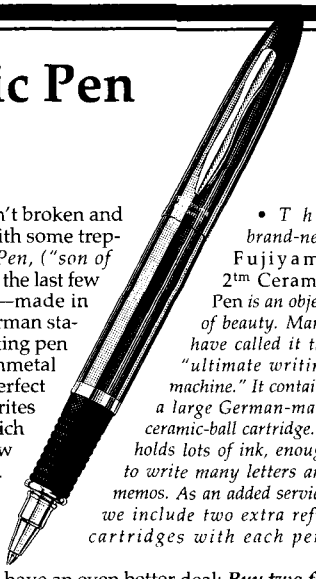

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White Racism: The Seductive Lure of an Unproven Theory

By Robert Weissberg

In 1964, America's most eminent sociologist, Talcott Parsons, and its most eminent black academic, Kenneth Clark, collaborated on a magisterial tome called *The Negro American*. What is most striking about the book today, which is as dated as its title, is that it has no index entries for either "racism" or "white racism." Nor does Howard Ehrlich's 1973 work *The Social Psychology of Prejudice*, which reviewed 600-plus studies on ethnic prejudice. Differences between blacks and whites were thought to be caused by other forces, like the cultural legacy of slavery, unequal access to economic resources, educational inequities. The real culprit, as Ehrlich's title indicates, was not "white racism" but "prejudice," which was certainly considered a formidable impediment to black progress, but not a decisive one. Moreover, it was clear to all and sundry that prejudice was a condition of ignorance, for which education and ever greater interracial contact were the cure.

Today, of course, "white racism" is endlessly invoked, measured, dissected, and employed as an all-purpose explanation of African-American malaise. There are, perhaps, as many varieties of "white racism" as Eskimos have names for snow—"crypto-racism," "neo-racism," "meta-racism," and "kinetic racism," among many others. College administrators vie with black activists in passionately calling for anti-racism wars, while white liberals flagellate themselves and their fellow Caucasians.

Almost any failing can be, and has been, excused by "white racism." One study, for example, argued that a racist, sexist, Eurocentric bias in *mathematics* blocked the scientific and intellectual development of minorities (Anderson, *Journal of Negro Education*, 1990). Traditional explanations of the absence of an entrepreneurial culture among American blacks, for example, are not only quickly dismissed, but the mere mention of them is itself considered evidence of a white-racist "mind-set."

After decades of false leads, it seems, the problem's root cause has been finally exposed. Compared with, say, the century or so it took for the public to accept the notion that germs cause disease, the embrace by universities, businesses, and government of the "white racism" explanation took but a historical millisecond. Why the dramatic change? There are two possible explanations for the sudden popularity of the "white racism" argument. One is scientific: Empirical evidence proves it. The other is that the "white racism" argument is politically convenient. Let me address each in turn.

The science of white racism is based on three simple propositions. The first is that nearly all whites, consciously or unconsciously, hold negative views of blacks. These views vary from old-fashioned stereotypes—e.g., blacks are childlike and excitable—to pseudoscientific notions—e.g., blacks are genetically less intelligent.

The second proposition is that these ideas deeply permeate society, are transmitted by books, films, art, music, and wherever else information is conveyed, and are implicitly written into our laws and institutional arrangements. All together, this constitutes white racism on a grand cultural scale.

The final and critical proposition is that white-racist beliefs are readily absorbed by blacks themselves and work their destructive power from the inside out. At its core, the incapacitation is psychological. White racism is a cognitive virus, inculcated by whites and passed on to blacks, that eventually creates the all-too-familiar tangle of pathologies.

Clearly, many whites harbor negative images of blacks. And it is equally true that many blacks passionately believe their difficulties flow from white racism. But to my knowledge, no scientific research

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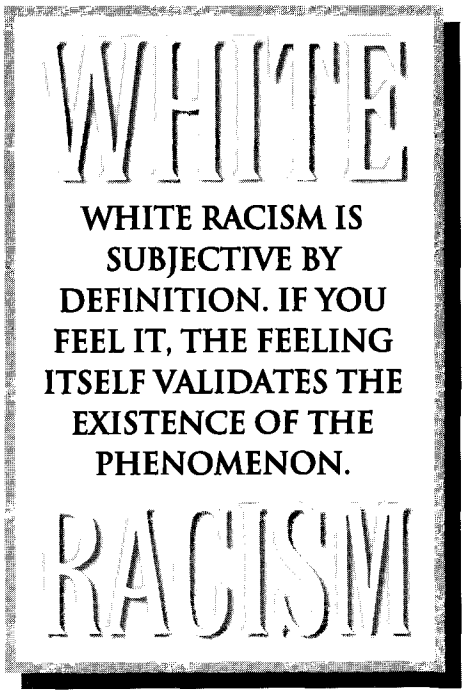
demonstrates how white racism—as a mental state among *whites*—incapacitates blacks. *PsycINFO*, a database that covers the field of psychology, features 87 entries from 1967 to 1995 when you use the keywords "white racism." None of these studies, however, attempts to explain just how white racism operates; its negative impact is merely assumed. Books by Cornel West, Derrick Bell, and others who analyze the destructive costs of white racism are likewise mute when it comes to offering hard evidence. Nor have inquiries to fellow scholars concerned with this subject elicited help in finding a single study to confirm the hypothesis that white racism harms blacks.

To appreciate the unsound empirical foundation of white racism's impact, consider one purported example of its documentation. It is offered by a well-published, Harvard-trained research professor at the University of Florida, appears in a scholarly journal, and is allegedly scientific in design. In "The Continuing Significance of Racism," published in the June 1992 *Journal of Black Studies*, Joe R. Feagin asks the question: What explains growing black attrition at predominantly white colleges? After reviewing other possible explanations—lack of financial aid, family deterioration, growing drug use, a disdain for education—Feagin sets off to demonstrate that the real culprit is the racist environment at white-dominated colleges and the ways in which blacks on campus routinely encounter debilitating hostility from white students, professors, administrators, even alumni.



Almost 200 middle-class African Americans were interviewed during 1988-89 to determine the source of the black exodus from college. Unpleasant memories are the only data Feagin presents. The views of relevant whites and other potentially pertinent information—academic records, for example—are not supplied. The interpretations of the black ex-students are not challenged, and corroborating details are not solicited.

A few such encounters are objectively hostile acts—being called "nigger" in public, for example, or racially charged encounters with police. Such clearly defined hostility might well have a negative impact on academic performance. But such hostility is the exception, not the rule, in Feagin's research. Most professors would recognize the vast majority of Feagin's tales if they came from white students: They are the lame, desperate excuses common to the academically and personally troubled. Several respondents complain about feeling unarticulated aversion to their personal features, like black hair or black speech inflection. Others believe they are not being treated as distinctive individuals. White professors made students feel bad by fretting about their poor attendance and correcting their English.

But in Feagin's research all these woes—remarkably similar to the woes of the adolescent in every novel, every television show, every cliché, trying to find a place for himself or herself in a cold, cruel world—are considered the result of white racism. It was, Feagin says, a ceaseless part of campus life, permeating everything from the secret meaning of casual conversations to the official "white" literary style. The campus environment cannot help but take an enervating toll. After experiencing all the unexpressed, nearly imperceptible, but "real" antagonism towards their very blackness, black students find dropping out a survival technique.

In legal language, these are all unsupported accusations—no evidence is offered of malice, physical intimidation, or slander. But this is the very nature of the charge of white racism. When we are asked to consider whether someone was discriminated against, we can do so because discrimination is objective in character. An academically well-qualified black who is denied admission to a college that accepts less qualified whites could justifiably claim discrimination based on race.

But white racism is subjective by definition. According to Feagin and its other theorists, even though white racism may be invisible to all but the recipient, if the recipient *feels* it, the feeling itself validates the existence of the phenomenon. The *intent* of the white racist is irrelevant; for example, a white teacher disproportionately praising black students might be guilty of racism if blacks sense that the praise is given solely because they are black. Because of white

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racism's fundamentally subjective character, anti-discrimination laws aimed at overt behavior cannot banish it even if such laws are effective. Therefore, eliminating bias in and of itself cannot bring racial harmony.

Not only does the white-racism theory lack scientific support, its deficiencies are obvious. Contradictory evidence abounds. Thomas Sowell has pointed out that blacks from the British West Indies exceed both native black Americans *and whites* in their professional and economic attainment. If white racism is so deeply ingrained, how can we explain all the white-dominated government and corporate efforts to ameliorate past discrimination? What about all the blacks elected in cities and congressional districts with white majorities? Nor can all the poll data depicting the absence of racist views among whites be ignored.

What is especially remarkable is the contrast between the intensive scrutiny given *The Bell Curve* and other statistical examinations of racial differences and the credulousness with which the white-racism theory has been treated. While *The Bell Curve* and its variants have produced an industry of hostile symposia placing every shred of evidence under a microscope, the white-racism theory escapes inspection.

This is hardly accidental.

If white racism is such a frail explanation, why does it have such cultural reach? Why do social scientists, who are so expert at devastating flimsy arguments, buy it so unquestionably? Why are white public officials, even outspoken conservatives, silent when society's racism is invoked as an all-purpose explanation of our ills? The answer is simple: The white-racism theory of injury has enormous appeal—*to whites themselves*. The theory's allure rests on its political and psychological utility.

First, consider simple monetary costs: "Curing" white racism may not work, but white-racism theorists themselves can be bought off pretty cheaply. Balance the outlays for diversity workshops, cosmetic educational adjustments, modifying public vocabulary, and other largely symbolic anti-racist gestures with, say, creating effective social-welfare programs, guaranteeing educational attainment, or strictly enforcing the criminal code, and you see how it works.

Imagine a college dean who is under pressure to ensure the graduation of hundreds of poorly prepared minority students. That is a formidable task; progress would be expensive, the labor would be intensive, and the result uncertain. But if this savvy bureaucrat proclaims white racism the culprit, one that can be conveniently addressed by mandatory four-hour sensitivity workshops, his burden lightens immeasurably.

There is no end to the novelties our college dean could propose to satisfy the white-racism theorists. An African-American cultural center. A few multicultural courses, maybe even a sub-discipline. And, of course, if he resists these solutions, that resistance will help confirm white racism's lingering, tenacious grip on *him*.

Those who choose to face race issues head-on must accept the eventuality of well-publicized marches, demonstrations, takeovers, lists of non-negotiable demands, lawsuits, boycotts, and possible acts of violence. Thus, agreeing with militants that white racism is to blame should be considered an act of *diplomacy*.

The theory offers well-meaning whites easy salvation compared with previous redemptive paths. Since, according to the theory, black problems originate in white minds, the responsibility of whites is to think "good thoughts." Atonement and a state of grace are achieved by using the proper terminology (e.g., "African-American community," not "black neighborhood") and disassociating from anything critical of the white-racism theory. Thus, on a college campus, reading *The Bell Curve* is itself a sin. By expunging dangerous negative stereotypes and inappropriate cultural expectations, whites can achieve a form of earthly salvation—even as other responsibilities seem to lighten. The obligations of the 1960s—sending kids to integrated schools, making financial donations, occasionally walking a picket line—are now unnecessary. Indeed, these once-virtuous gestures may actually reflect the white-racist idea that blacks cannot manage their own struggle!

The white-racism theory excuses whites of the 1990s from the good deeds that offered salvation in the 1960s. They no longer have to participate in interracial dating. They need not seek out black friends or fund civil-rights organizations. Instead, they can perfect their attitudes privately.

And for those old-fashioned white liberals from the 1960s, the white-racism theory is deliverance. It drives out more disturbing, awkward, and embarrassing explanations of racial differences in outcomes that were not supposed to persist after the efforts of the Great Society were undertaken. How do they reconcile $5 trillion in Great Society programs with the decimated black family and a ghetto in worse condition than it was before the 1960s?

The white-racism theory offers the answer. Not only does it bestow responsibility "where it belongs," but the guilt is virtually immutable, incurable. The masochistic liberal may have an impeccable public

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record, but he knows his racist soul to be beyond purification. After all, doesn't he avoid rundown black neighborhoods? Doesn't he fear lower-class black males when they pass him on the street? Such uncontrolled reactions confirm the key element in the white-racism argument: All whites, regardless of deeds and denials, harbor anti-black feeling. Authoritatively telling a 1960s liberal that he suffers from racism is like telling a hypochondriac that he is ill.

The white-racism theory has created a booming business for whites and blacks alike—those skilled at hunting white racism down, exposing its destructive power, and hectoring its perpetrators. It offers them a lucrative lifetime career in academia and diversity-counseling and provides similar remuneration to the bureaucrats who hire them. Governments have no choice but to create paid task forces to examine school textbooks, curriculums, even school disciplinary actions. Though these expenditures constitute little more than high-minded extortion, they can be publicly justified as a small price to pay for the promise of racial peace.

Thus, the white-racism argument offers something for everybody. Even conservative unbelievers may (privately) acknowledge that its official acceptance maintains an uneasy social peace without leading to skyrocketing deficits. Realistic liberals frustrated by government's failure receive some psychological comfort: Social-welfare expansion, court-imposed integration edicts, anti-discrimination laws, preferential-treatment programs, and so on were good, well-intentioned ideas, but they could do nothing about the true sickness.

Something for everybody—yes, except the black kids in Feagin's study and their cohorts who are sentenced to a lifetime of believing that they are hated, that they will always be hated, and that there is nothing they can do about it. ♦

EMERGE AND THE LURE OF RACISM

By Elena Neuman

Emerge, a glossy monthly that calls itself "Black America's Newsmagazine," is nothing if not provocative. The image on the magazine's January 1997 cover is of a young black woman passed out in a fetal position inside a glass crack pipe that forms the letter "I" in "CIA." The February cover featured a photo- illustration of a young black man with a slave's shackle locked around his neck silhouetted in front of a U.S. dollar bill. But the November 1996 cover courted the most controversy by depicting Justice Clarence Thomas as a grinning, servile piece of yard statuary together with the cover lines "Uncle Thomas: Lawn Jockey of the Far Right." "No self-respecting non-black journal could ever get away with the kinds of things that are said in that magazine," says Emanuel McLittle, publisher of *Destiny*, another black news magazine. "No white press could ever get away with putting Justice Thomas on his knee shining Justice Scalia's shoes."

The magazine has openly celebrated City College black-studies professor Leonard Jeffries, who was stripped of his departmental chairmanship because of anti-Semitic rabble-rousing; Mumia Abu-Jamal, the cop killer who has become a self-styled "political prisoner" while sitting on death row; and those old standbys Marion Barry, Al Sharpton, and (twice) Louis Farrakhan.

"Black America's Newsmagazine" offers black America the news that it is besieged by a dominant white establishment eager to keep black people down. In stories like "FBI Coverup: How Black Panther Geronimo Pratt was Framed" (June 1994), "Badge of Racism: Blacks Undercover Fear White Cops" (September 1995), and "Double Standard: Is There a Conspiracy Against Black Officials?" (October 1996), *Emerge* has become one of the chief propounders of the idea that the white establishment consciously uses government authority to harass, persecute, and downgrade American blacks.

"They are—despite what they say—the bully pulpit for the extreme left black establishment and the far-out nationalists," McLittle says. "And the

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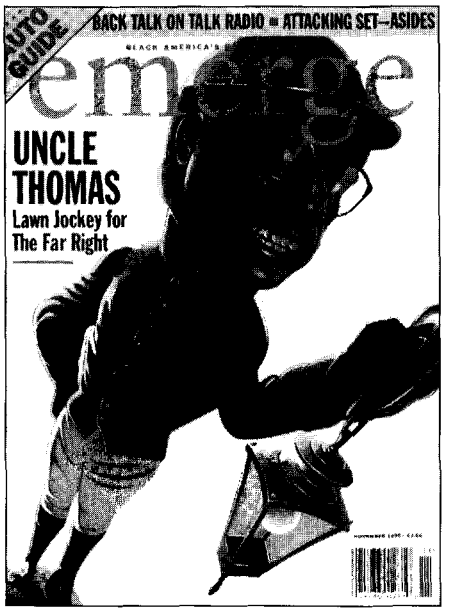
strangest thing is that corporate America is supporting them." Indeed it does: General Motors and Kraft Foods have advertised in almost every issue, often with double-page color spreads. Ford, AT&T, General Electric, and Kodak are also frequent advertisers. *Emerge* has an advertising portfolio many magazines can only dream about. This shouldn't be the case, according to the party line inside the advertising industry, because *Emerge* courts controversy, which supposedly frightens advertisers away.

Take, for instance, the magazine's six-page paean to Leonard Jeffries, who offers the view that blacks are "sun people" and whites are "ice people," that melanin is responsible for black superiority, and that Jews have conspired with the mafia to degrade blacks in Hollywood. The article refers to Jeffries lovingly as "Dr. J." and is an almost entirely sympathetic portrayal of a scholar supposedly harassed by Jewish critics, "maligned" and "labeled anti-Semitic," and targeted by "death threats."



"*Emerge* calls itself a news magazine, but it doesn't deal with journalism in the way that a newspaper would," says Gwen Daye Richardson, editor of *Headway*, a black political magazine, which, like *Destiny*, is struggling for corporate advertising. "They don't just present facts. They have their spin. And it is that racism underlies every aspect of black life. They promote that view. And because of that, they like the radicals. They like Farrakhan; they like Ben Chavis; they like Leonard Jeffries. And they hate Clarence Thomas."

But *Emerge*, a handsome publication whose slick color ads are matched by its slick graphics, doesn't look like a newsletter for radicals and black nationalists. It looks more like the *Atlantic Monthly* or *Harper's* and claims a healthy circulation of 161,000. The look of *Emerge* screams "mainstream," and so does its readership. According to a 1994 subscriber study, college graduates make up 88 percent of its readership—a ratio far exceeding the figure for magazine-readers generally (39 percent) and more than triple the figure for black magazine-readers (27 percent). Three quarters of its subscribers own their primary residence, and their median family income is $55,200—a figure that places the readership comfortably within the American middle class, and in the upper echelons of black America. And the magazine's focus on racism has been one of the hallmarks of its success. It was begun in 1989 as a black lifestyle magazine intended to compete with *Ebony*, still the most popular black publication in the country. But when *Emerge*'s editor, George Curry, came on board in 1993, he replaced the staff and got rid of the magazine's soft, celebrity-driven focus. Since then, sales have surged by almost 20 percent; they are expected to pass the 200,000 mark within four years.

Curry acknowledges that *Emerge*'s covers are deliberately provocative: "We're in the business of selling magazines." He insists, however, that the magazine is "balanced," and each issue does include articles on health care, sports, technology, and the arts, usually written without a political purpose. In fact, even the politically charged cover stories often include a few contrarian quotes. But those are cosmetics. *Emerge*'s readers are never left with any doubt about the magazine's stance. Its reportage echoes its covers.

The real question posed by *Emerge*'s prominence in the black community is this: Is the magazine simply the propaganda organ of a small coterie of black nationalists who are filling the ears and minds of their successful, BMW-driving readers (the magazine's readership survey tallied BMW owners) with a heavy dose of alienation? Or is *Emerge* an accurate reflection of the socio-political attitudes of its educated black audience? Do black pediatricians, social workers, and businessmen really think the CIA poured crack into the inner cities? Do black civil-service workers and college educators think blacks are being used against their will for secret government-sponsored medical experiments? Do black attorneys and accountants believe there's a sinister FBI plot to discredit black politicians?

In a word: yes.

Just look at the reaction to the O.J. Simpson criminal trial, and the pervasive belief among blacks (the bourgeois as well as the poor) that the Los Angeles police department planted the bloody glove in an effort to frame Simpson. A survey conducted in 1990

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found that one third of black people interviewed believed that the AIDS virus was produced in a government germ-warfare lab and released into the air to commit genocide against blacks. The group sampled in that survey was not a bunch of Black Panthers gathered for a 30-year reunion; it was 1,000 churchgoers in five American cities. The *New York Times* and CBS News, in a survey conducted that same year, obtained similar results: A quarter of black people said that the government "deliberately makes sure that drugs are easily available in poor black neighborhoods in order to harm black people." (Another third said they believed such a conspiracy possible.) And 32 percent said "the government deliberately singles out and investigates black elected officials in order to discredit them." The survey pool—over 50 interviews with black public officials, professors, doctors, students, public-health workers, and average citizens—included a large number of middle-class blacks.

Emerge's editor, George Curry, is onto something. Recent polling data show that in the last five years middle-class blacks have become the *most* alienated, *most* radicalized, and *most* nationalistic of all black Americans.

The Million Man March of 1995 provides the most recent evidence. If you turned on the television during Farrakhan's speech and watched as the camera panned the crowd, what you saw were faces of middle-class black men, many of whom came with their young sons in tow. They were not the faces of a disenfranchised underclass.

In a poll of 1,047 participants in the march, Ronald Lester found that attendees were younger (under 45), wealthier (incomes of $30,000 or more), and better educated (75 percent college-educated) than black Americans as a whole. The poll detected an undercurrent of racial tension among the participants typical of black nationalists: Half of all march participants said they took part "to send a message to white people." Six in ten said they had an unfavorable impression of whites, and four in ten said they had an unfavorable view of Jews. Nearly nine in ten said they had a favorable impression of Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. In fact, the poll found that Farrakhan was more popular than any other prominent black political figure, including Jesse Jackson and Colin Powell.

It may seem paradoxical that those black Americans who have made the greatest strides toward attaining the American dream are the very ones who are most apt to believe that white America is trying to keep them down. It may seem all the more surprising when one considers that things are looking up for the black middle class. According to the most recent census report on poverty, black households, for example, were the only racial or ethnic group to experience real income gains between 1993 and 1994. And black middle-class women have made the greatest advances in recent years. The census bureau reported in 1995 that college-educated black women employed as executives, administrators, or managers had median earnings of $40,494, 10 percent *higher* than incomes of comparable white women. Twelve percent of college students across the country are now black—a number proportionate to the black population.

WHITE

MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS ARE NOW THE MOST ALIENATED, MOST RADICALIZED, AND MOST NATIONALISTIC OF ALL BLACK AMERICANS.

RACISM

And yet Ron Lester says the evidence of middle-class black anger is incontrovertible. In numerous black focus groups and polls he has conducted across the country, he has found that the wealthiest blacks are the segment of the black population most likely to perceive themselves as the victims of racism. When a national sample of black respondents was asked, "Do you think racism has increased or decreased in the last five years?" the one group that thought racism had increased in the late '80s and early '90s comprised blacks earning over $50,000. All the other income groups thought racism had leveled off or was declining.

"When you talk about racism in American society, the blacks making higher incomes, with higher levels of education, tend to think that more racism exists than blacks with lower incomes and education," Lester says. "It seems that the more access and familiarity blacks have with whites, the more likely they are to think racism is a significant factor. They think they work harder than their white counterparts to get where they are. That they have to jump through more hoops. And they're bitter about it. The lower-income blacks almost dismiss white people because they don't

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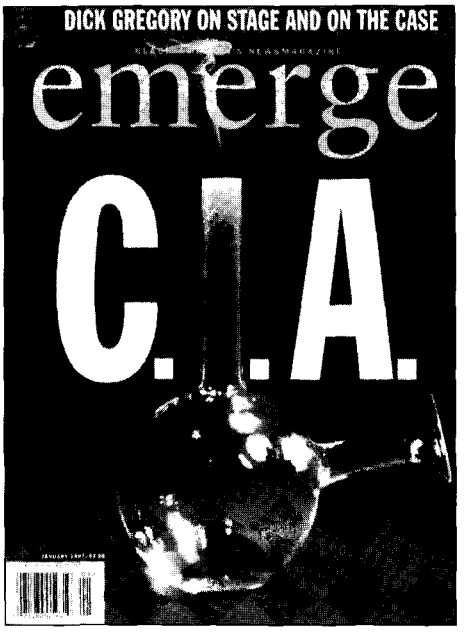
have dealings with them. Most of them think white people are irrelevant to their life."

The first sign of this change in middle-class attitudes surfaced in the aftermath of the Rodney King beating. In 1992, UCLA sociologist Larry Bobo conducted 1,000 interviews with blacks, Hispanics, and Asians before and after the first Simi Valley trial, measuring perceptions of racism. When he compared black responses with those of the other two racial groups, he was shocked to find that black attitudes had changed by a full standard deviation—a huge statistical jump. Bobo then re-analyzed the data to see whether there was some sector of the black community where this change was most clearly rooted. It turned out that income was the dispositive factor. Before the verdict, only 50 percent of high-income blacks agreed with the statement, "Members of my ethnic group just haven't been treated fairly." After the verdict, that number went up to almost 80 percent among blacks earning more than $50,000.



"The black middle class showed the largest amount of racial alienation, because they were the ones whose expectations were dashed," Bobo explains. "Poor working-class blacks had much lower expectations of white society and its institutions to begin with. It was especially the new black middle class who had been assured that the old racial barriers had been overcome and if everyone played by the rules, they were going to get ahead. Following that verdict there was a radical and far-reaching reinterpretation of one's place and prior experiences for many middle-class African Americans."

But was the response to the Rodney King trial an accurate marker of a broader change in attitudes? After all, the King beating and its aftermath took place in and around Los Angeles, which is a far more racially charged city than many others in America. In 1993 and 1994, Michael Dawson, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, decided to find out. He tested Bobo's thesis to see if it would hold true nationally, asking both Bobo's questions and others that had been asked in national surveys in the '80s. Not only did Dawson confirm Bobo's findings, he found that the level of racial alienation among upper-income blacks was even higher nationally than it had been in Los Angeles.

Dawson also found that levels of nationalism were higher among upper-income blacks than they had ever been. He notes that after declining in the 1980s, the number of blacks who said they supported the formation of a separate black political party doubled over the previous five years to constitute 50 percent of the black community. Over half of black Americans, Dawson found, believe that blacks should join black-only organizations and institutions. More than 70 percent agree that blacks should control the political and economic resources of their communities.

According to Dawson's study, the overwhelming majority of blacks view the American legal, economic, and political systems to be "generally unfair to African Americans" and believe that black people are "owed a better chance than they currently have in American society." (Sixty-three percent say the federal government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living.) In fact, a staggering two-thirds of black Americans believe that racial equality will not be achieved in their lifetimes, if ever.

"Given the numbers, it's not surprising that there's a segment—not a majority—of the black community who find it persuasive when they're told that they're in a race war, and that African Americans are losing," Dawson says. "There's a broad suspicion of police and security agencies in general, including the CIA. Being nationalistic makes one more likely to believe some of the conspiracy theories."

It isn't supposed to work this way, at least not according to the precepts of economic conservatism. Rising incomes and opportunities are supposed to give black Americans a sense of inclusion and a stake in the American dream. Why isn't this happening?

One reason may be that the black middle class is a different kind of middle class altogether. "The black middle class cannot be compared with some white suburban group because they didn't get there by the same means," says Elizabeth Wright, publisher of *Issues and Views*, a black conservative journal. Black

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success, she explains, doesn't have the same foundation as that of other ethnic groups—Jews, Poles, Asians—which circumvented establishment hostility by entrepreneurial effort. The vast majority of middle-class blacks work in government jobs or for non-profit organizations and educational institutions tied to the government by grants. In addition, many are beneficiaries of affirmative action. "They know that their status is artificially attained and therefore they will always feel that they have to band together," Wright says. "They feel constantly unstable, fearful that it's all going to be taken away from them."

Bart Landry, a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland and author of *The New Black Middle Class*, observes other differences between middle-class whites and blacks. The black middle class, he explains, has deep kinship and social ties to the black inner cities. Many of its members work in public schools, hospitals, and other institutions serving the urban underclass. These contacts generate a high level of cross-class racial solidarity and kinship.

In addition, says Landry, the black middle class tends to feel more vulnerable economically than its white counterpart. Many white-collar blacks lost their jobs in the government downsizing that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s; those who kept their jobs fear that further cutbacks may hit them in the future. "Many worry that they are four or five paychecks away from losing what they have," says Landry.

WHITE

THE REAL DANGER IS THAT BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS ANGST WILL TRICKLE DOWN TO THE CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC BLACK UNDERCLASS.

RACISM

If you ask *Emerge*'s editor, however, it all comes down to white racism. The glass ceiling for women is the "cement ceiling" for the black middle class. All the education, money, and sophistication in the world cannot free them from the burden of their blackness, or what some middle-class blacks call "the indignity of the day": taxis that refuse to pick up black riders, store clerks who follow black customers through the aisles, and police officers who regularly stop young black motorists.

"It doesn't matter how much money you have, you still will be discriminated against," says Curry. "So, while you may look at the indicators—the affluence, the housing, the income, and education—there's still this burden of being black, and that is what white Americans really don't understand. There's a heavy burden just trying to get by day after day as an African American. And as a result, the black middle class is less optimistic. They're disappointed and feel that they have been lied to. They feel that the American dream for blacks is a hoax."

This combination of perceived financial instability and racial disappointment surely exists, and may partly explain the radicalism of the black middle class. Black people, however, don't have a monopoly on financial worries or victim status. Many disadvantaged ethnic groups, not to mention blue-collar whites, live only a paycheck away from financial ruin. New immigrants often experience the stigma of racial prejudice, and yet we have not seen a dramatic rise in radicalism within the Hispanic community, for example.

Even after the passage of Proposition 187 in California, withdrawing many benefits from illegal immigrants, Mexican-American leaders did not claim that the white "establishment" had used Hispanic children in medical experiments or channeled crack into immigrant communities.

"The stuff *Emerge* is feeding its readers is poison," says Armstrong Williams, a conservative black talk-show host in Washington, D.C. "It's slowly killing people mentally. Making them hateful, resentful; making them feel like they're being kept down and that they'll never prosper in this country. It's like keeping them mentally depressed. It's very dangerous."

The real danger is that black middle-class angst will trickle down to the black underclass, whose members have consistently shown themselves in polls to be cautiously optimistic about their future and the future of American race relations. If the pessimism of the black middle class permeates the inner cities, poor blacks may simply abandon the American dream and with it any possibility of upward mobility.

That is one issue affecting black America you won't be reading about anytime soon in the pages of "Black America's Newsmagazine." ♦

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Coming Out of the Cassock

By Matt Labash

For years, the debate over openly gay clergy has roiled Catholics and fractured mainline Protestant denominations, pitting liberal theologians against rock-ribbed literalists. Those in the ever-receding majority who believe the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God are astonished to find themselves on the defensive when they criticize the very idea of permitting gay clergy, since scriptures like Leviticus 18:22 aren't what you'd call ambiguous: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination."

The press, of course, has never been known for its obsession with Biblical imperatives. And these days, aside from donating organs to diseased siblings, there is no surer path to eliciting media sympathy or securing profitable dividends than coming out for the Lord as a gay cleric. Anonymity and humble servitude are as antiquated as animal sacrifice, because for those who step out of the closet boldly, the perks are immediate and seductive. Declaring your sexual proclivities a "gift from God" in the pulpit transforms your carnal inclinations into spiritual communion. As your ministerial role is superseded by your political and sexual appetites, you find yourself compared to historical martyrs, or at the very least you collect fat book advances as you battle your church's canon. And, perhaps most important, truckling newspaper feature writers in search of the kind of religious figure they can write about generously without tripping involuntary gag reflexes are all too happy to harmonize in the "It's Raining Men, Hallelujah" chorus.

Take Malcolm Boyd, who recently retired as a minister from the Episcopal church. Known in the '60s as the "nightclub priest," Boyd rose to fame working the civil rights/anti-war circuit. His seminal work was the 1965 prayer book "Are You Running With Me, Jesus?" And no one could fault Jesus for politely declining, if only so that He would not have to be subjected to Boyd's prose style: "After we make love, you hold me in your arms. My heart is pounding, I lay upon your chest. . . . Bless us Jesus."

Boyd was an early comer-outer, emerging in 1976. Soon after, he began publishing books like *Look Back in Joy: A Celebration of Gay Lovers*, books that feature poems like "The Bishop," in which the eponymous ecclesiastic's "right hand moved slowly over my buttocks, then up and down my legs. 'If you haven't been a good boy I will have to whip your bare a—,' he said. The heavy, cold episcopal ring on his hand lay on my naked a— as if it were an instrument of possible torture."

One would expect such composition to have earned Boyd censure by the church, jeopardizing his standing and perhaps costing him his platform for celebrityhood. One would be mistaken, as the Episcopal church's 1979 resolution declaring that "it is not appropriate for this church to ordain a practicing homosexual" is rarely upheld. Most of the mainline denominations ostensibly forbid the ordination of "practicing" homosexuals, though they are similarly lax.

Not only has Boyd escaped his church's wrath, he's been consecrated in the secular press. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, straight-faced, that Boyd was "mysterious yet open, complex yet simple, and simultaneously at war and peace with himself," and that "he is untroubled by the fact that many in the church still refuse to accept him." This noble attitude has freed him to decry the church's "anti-human, anti-Christian treatment of gays"—though while he was an associate rector and writer-in-residence at an Episcopal church in Santa Monica, his deprivation included living openly for years with his lover, presiding over a dozen same-sex unions, and forming an Institute of Gay Spirituality and Theology. Even his performance art (based on his first book), with its "aerobic semaphores" and "locomotion choreography," received praise from the *Los Angeles Times*. After a dearth of Messianic theater, reviewer Donna Perlmutter wrote that "little else could be so ripe as the Jesus theme."

Gay clerical sanctification is an ecumenical affair. Though the Southern Baptists and other fundamentalists don't go in much for drinking or dancing, let alone buggery, they too have made a standout contribution to the gay-minister gallery: the Rev. Mel White. White was formerly the closeted ghostwriter to evangelical

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luminaries like Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell. When he finally accepted his homosexuality and broke up his marriage after "spending all those years trying to return God's gift," as he wrote in the *San Francisco Examiner*, he decided to take on "the enemy," namely all his former employers, for their homophobia. They cancelled his contracts.

Martyr overboard! The *Roanoke Times* said sympathetically that White "couldn't get the time of day from people who had bared their souls to him." Gannett News Service columnist Deb Price called him "a deeply religious man fighting for the rightness of his cause" against "the towering giant in the current anti-gay crusade." Frank Rich of the *New York Times* dubbed White a "decidedly unhypocritical and eloquent champion of gay rights."

In an interview with *USA Today*, White compared himself to Martin Luther King, while the *Baltimore Sun* compared him to Gandhi. But Gandhi did not receive his civil-disobedience training from the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, as White did before he showed up at Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network with flowers on Valentine's Day to talk Robertson out of his Biblically inspired stance against homosexuality. Later, in an open letter, Robertson wrote that he didn't need White's word on the subject, since he already had Moses's and Paul's. But when White wouldn't go away and Robertson had him arrested for trespassing, the media again maintained their mournful vigil. Gannett's Price even visited him in jail, and noticed his "face gaunt from three weeks of fasting" as a result of his hunger strike to protest being jailed (which he could have avoided by paying a $50 fine).

EPISCOPAL BISHOP JOHN SPONG, WHO ASSERTS THAT ST. PAUL WAS A "SELF-HATING GAY MAN," HAS INSPIRED BIDDING WARS BETWEEN BLUE-CHIP PUBLISHERS.

Obscure when heterosexual, White in his gay incarnation garnered a full hour on *Larry King Live* and a *60 Minutes* segment, a book for Simon & Schuster (*Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America*), and, soon to come, another tome (*Storming the Gate: A Gay Christian Discovers Soul Force*). Though White is by his own account "totally free of hate," he continues to blame his former employers for everything from the Jenny Jones homosexual-murder case to losing his car keys under the chaise longue.

There are different forms of canonization in the the gay-cleric-as-media-star universe. There is posthumous canonization, as in the case of Catholic priest Jim Healy, who ministered at the Queen of Peace parish in Arlington, Va. The *Washington Post* dedicated a 3,648-word story to his memory simply because he was a gay cleric who died of AIDS, and because the "liberal Catholic renegade" spent "decades at the altar calling people to . . . fight the world's cruelties and injustice." Then there is the unwilled and unwanted posthumous canonization performed on Methodist bishop Finis Crutchfield. He died of AIDS in 1987, but was in the closet to the end and from all evidence had no desire to be outed after his passing. Even so, media reports revealed that, unbeknownst to his church, his wife, and his son, Crutchfield frequented gay bars and bathhouses three times a week and engaged in group sex. The *Chicago Tribune* thought the story "particularly poignant to other gay clergy, who typically face the loss of their pastoral assignment . . . if they go public with their sexual preferences."

Lesbian canonization was recently accorded the Rev. Jeanne Audrey Powers, a Methodist. Her coming-out party included being named the Minnesota Women's Press "1995 Newsmaker" for "furthering equality, safety and respect for women." She also helped conceive the annual ecumenical "Re-Imagining Jesus Christ and Us" conference, where lesbian clergy swill honey-milk and worship female deities while asserting Christ's death was a "model for human child abuse." You can even receive a gay canonization if you're not gay. Bishop John Spong's Biblical scholarship (he asserts that Paul was a "self-hating gay man") has inspired bidding wars between blue-chip publishers and made him what is believed to be the first Episcopal bishop from the Newark diocese to expound his views on *Oprah*.

But few have profited quite as successfully as the Rev. Peter Gomes, the gay, black, conservative minister of Harvard's Memorial Church. Which is not to be reductive: He's also a "reluctant revolutionary," according to a recent 10-page *New Yorker* spread. In fact, Gomes "defies stereotypes," we are told in no fewer than 12 recent stories, with Gomes himself telling the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "I have spent all my life transcending and breaking stereotypes."

Gomes is the kind of gay preacher who doesn't want to be known solely as a "gay preacher," though he reserves the right to "devote the rest of my life to addressing the 'religious case' against gays." Just don't

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put *your* labels on him.

Gomes came out in Cambridge in 1991 after a small student magazine named *Peninsula* dedicated an entire issue to making a scriptural case against homosexuality, an effort Gomes compared to the Spanish Inquisition and the Salem witch trials. When he made the announcement, the *Boston Globe* reported his ovation lasted 27 seconds, while the *New Yorker* insisted it was upwards of a minute. Though he was Harvard's highest ranking religious official and had worked the Bush and Reagan inaugurations, the *Washington Post* fretted that "his days as White House preacher may be over." But his post was secure. And if his coming out evidences anything, it's that his semi-apostasy is good for business. Though Gomes has been at Harvard since the mid-'70s, a Nexis search of straight Gomes (pre-1992) turns up approximately 30 hits. But gay Gomes numbers 200-plus.

Much of that is due to his new book, *The Good Book*, which implores us to read the Bible with "a moral imagination" (or, in his case, just an active one). While the book speaks to many issues, Gomes attacks scriptural literalists who hold that the Bible speaks clearly against homosexuality for suffering from the "moral obtuseness" of the ordinary Germans who permitted the Holocaust. So powerful has the resistance been to Gomes's brave assertion of principle that the book, his first, was snatched up by Morrow for $350,000 at auction, solely on the basis of a seven-page proposal. Before he even wrote it, his prescient publisher described it as "one of those spiritual classics . . . an instant winner and an eternal one."

IN THE NARCISSISTIC POSTMODERN CHURCH, BIBLE-BASED DISSENTERS ARE AS IRRELEVANT AS OLD TESTAMENT DIETARY LAWS. YOU PICK YOUR OWN DEITY.

Gomes was featured on the American Dream segment of the NBC nightly news because he "is a man of God who wears a coat of many colors." He's sold 90,000 copies since the fall, numbers that will only be stoked by his upcoming *60 Minutes* segment. And he is believed to be the first Plummer Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard College ever to be featured in a two-page Q&A in *People* magazine.

Print reporters who'd have an aneurysm before abiding a preacher like Jerry Falwell making a splashy show of affluence, or Clarence Thomas bragging that he is an "Afro-Saxon," get orgiastic about Gomes's WASPy worldliness (he's a Black Brahmin and president of Plymouth's Pilgrim Society). Press accounts read like J. Peterman catalog captions when detailing his gold pocket watch and fob, his Griffin cigars, his English gardens, even his study lined with tapes of "Jeeves and Wooster."

But the free pass he's getting pales in comparison with the raves for *The Good Book*. "I believe it is easily the best contemporary book on the Bible for thoughtful people," proclaimed the Right Reverend Lord Runcie, the 102nd Archbishop of Canterbury. "If we open our minds as well as our hearts, it's never too late to be transformed," said the omni-affectionate Deb Price of Gannett.

Never mind that *The Good Book*, or at least the part everyone's worked up over, is fraught with specious assertions, such as "One has to look rather hard [through the scriptures], and with a user-friendly concordance, to find any mention of homosexuality at all." Not really. My remainder-rack concordance had 12 references in 10 different books of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments), all of which spoke as disapprovingly as Leviticus.

Gomes does end up listing several verses himself, since his objective is not to espouse tolerance generally, but to argue against the Bible's arguments against homosexuality. He deals with them, in logic too tortured to replicate here, mostly by recounting the research of a handful of contemporary theologians, who'd get upbraided by nine out of ten Greek and Hebrew scholars.

Gomes plays hermeneutic hopscotch through barely penetrable thickets of pop theological assumptions and porous reasoning throughout *The Good Book*. But so goes the new orthodoxy of the narcissistic postmodern church, where Bible-based dissenters are as irrelevant as Old Testament dietary laws, and you are to pick your own deity (less often a transcendent divinity than an extension of yourself) and worship accordingly. Nobody seems to mind, least of all the media.

Last fall, the Rev. Erin Swenson of Atlanta, formerly Eric Swenson, had his/her ordination upheld by the Presbyterian Church (USA). Was there even a modicum of outrage or shock concerning the genital-switching pastor? Not hardly, but there was this unblinking notice in the *Wilmington Morning Star*: "Along with her 20 years of experience as a counselor for both heterosexual and homosexual couples, she is also 'transgendered,' a condition she sees as 'a gift from God.'" ♦

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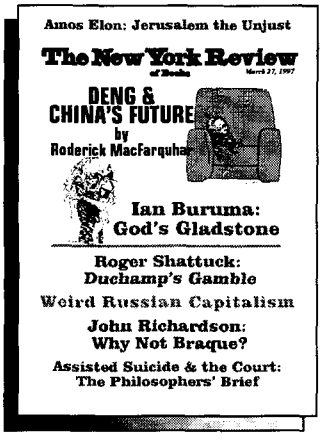

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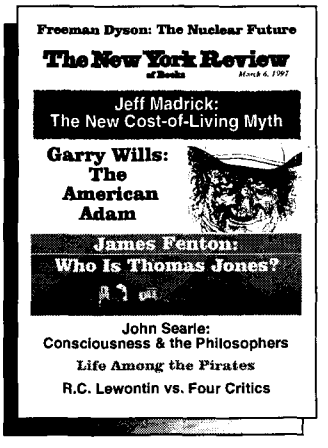

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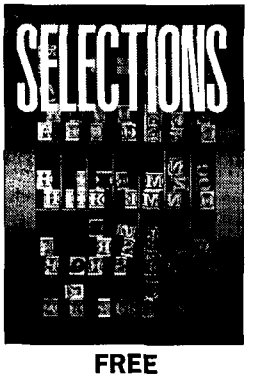

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PANTS ON FIRE!

Who Really Believes Kathryn Harrison's Incest Tale?

By Mary Eberstadt

How did you while away the first half of your twenties? Did you study? Did you work? Did you hang around with your boyfriend or girlfriend? Did you meet up with your long-lost father and embark on a four-year sexual relationship that began in an airport, continued in motel rooms, apartments, and other intriguing places (Grandpa's house!) across the country, and ended only after a final year during which you took up residence in his house, surrounded by his second wife and children?

If that last question has set you to nodding vigorously, then you probably are well aware already that the publishing world has finally got the book for you. *The Kiss: A Memoir*, by three-time novelist Kathryn Harrison, has been the object of one of the most successfully orchestrated publicity campaigns in literary memory. *Harper's* magazine (where the author's husband, novelist Colin Harrison, is deputy editor) published a portion of the work over two years ago, and the *New Yorker* purchased rights to run an excerpt before publication. The Literary Guild and the Book-of-the-Month Club both bid on it and the latter won. The canny business reasoning behind all this scrambling for advantage now appears quite sound. For insofar as we are all either apologists for incest or deplorers of it, here is finally a book over which people will choose sides.

In the meantime the author herself, indeed the whole Harrison family, has become ubiquitous. There is Mrs. Harrison in the February issue of *Vanity Fair*, in a fetching black leotard and bolero jacket, the centerpiece of a study on the new wave of female memoirists. There she is again some weeks later in the Style section of the *Washington Post*, glamorously photographed with her husband and her father-in-law, headmaster of the prestigious Sidwell Friends School (where the President's daughter is enrolled). You wouldn't say these people shun publicity. Harrison *père* brags to the papers that the book is "superb"; husband Colin is said to be publishing his reaction to the book in a forthcoming issue of *Vogue*; and the author herself, career in skyrocket, is reportedly now the head fiction judge for the National Book Awards.

Kathryn Harrison
The Kiss
A Memoir
Random House, 207 pp., $20

Now, for the literary world to weigh in as decisively as it has here on behalf of any book is itself a spectacle worthy of some attention. This much would be true even if the subject at hand were not something so self-evidently spellbinding as the tale of the four-year sexual entanglement between an obese preacher/theologian and his anorexic Stanford-educated first child. But the multiple showcasings of Mrs. Harrison's memoir are if anything even more remarkable given the anorexic character of the text itself. In truth, this is one waif of a memoir. It weighs in at a mere 207 pages and has margins the size of fanny paddles. Per word, *The Kiss* could very well turn out to be the best-paying father-daughter incest story of our time.

It is also, to the complete commercial vindication of the parties involved, a book that has already summoned prominent and impassioned reviews. To endorsers and admirers, *The Kiss* is "uncanny" and "heartbreaking" (Tobias Wolff); "fearless and frightening, ironic and compassionate" (Mary Gordon); "amazing and terrifying" (Luc Sante); and—somebody had to say it—"a moral victory" (Robert Coles). "Lyrical and dry, with this analytical quality," essayist Phillip Lopate enthuses in *Vanity Fair*. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt calls it "beautifully written" and counsels that "the reader's defense . . . can only be to try to understand."

Then there are the critics. "Slimy, repellent, meretricious, cynical"; "incest chic" and "cultural rot"; "Ms. Harrison's conscience is conspicuously absent from her memories." This partial list, attributable respectively to Jonathan Yardley in the *Washington Post*, Suzanne Fields in the *Washington Times*, and Cynthia Crossen in the *Wall Street Journal*, is, one can safely imagine, only the harbinger of more denunciations to come.

The one thing that no one has yet managed to explain, however, is why

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we should believe that this story is true. To be sure, a certain skepticism has been ventured. As Crossen observed, for example, "some scenes" in the book "defy credulity"; and Jonathan Yardley did qualify his critical revulsion with an "if, by the way, anything herein actually happened as she claims it did."

These are sound points, but they don't go far enough. For the truth, and for all we know, the only truth, to be gleaned from the pages of *The Kiss* is that there is no compelling reason to believe that certain things happened as the author says they did, and several good reasons to surmise that they did not.

Let us start by taking *The Kiss* on its own terms—i.e., as a first-person narrative of a series of traumatic happenings, all of them presented here without dates, times, names, or even, for the most part, locations, and in which all the other principals of the story, apart from the narrator and her father, are now dead. In any memoir, the narrator bears the burden of winning the reader's confidence; in a memoir like this, of the only-I-escaped-to-tell variety, that burden is quadrupled. So who is this narrator, anyway, and what, in the course of this memoir, do we learn about her?

For starters, her childhood and early adulthood seem to have been spent *in extremis*. In between and all around whatever else is happening in her life, she is stricken by (in alphabetical order only) amenorrhea, amnesia, anorexia, asthma, bulimia, dehydration, depression, insomnia, narcolepsy, pneumonia, rashes, and shingles. And that's just the technical stuff. There are also coughing fits, sore throats, an inability to breathe, suicidal longings, and acts of self-mutilation. Remember, this is a very short book.

Our first observation, therefore, is that this narrator is either a hypochondriac of the very first order or the single most physically afflicted human being since Job. How many of these awful things did she really suffer from? None? Some? All? Is it quibbling to observe that if everything she says is true, then she is asking us to rely on the objectivity, detachment, and accuracy of someone whose usual point of view is that of a hospital?

Quite apart from the problem of her physical state, there is the matter of her mental *déshabille*. Here is what we learn of her girlhood—that is to say, the twenty or so years that precede whatever started with her father's kiss. She thinks that she is stalked by a ghost. She sucks dry ice because it makes her bleed. She tortures her fingers with a vise from her grandfather's workbench. She collects Seconal tablets from an unnamed source (Mom, is that you?) and hides them in her desk. She stays up late after Christmas and birthdays and other holidays so she can rewrap all her presents as if she'd never opened them. There are also numerous episodes of panicking and insomnia and, of course, a whole lot of throwing up. Even something as ordinary as a tape recorder strikes her mute with terror. (It is, you see, "a black casket with shiny steel hardware, the kind into which a magician locks a girl before he saws her in half.")

Harrison also, if what she says is true, has a flair for sadism. In what may be the single most emetic passage in all the book, she describes how, at the age of eleven, she becomes obsessed by a litter of newborn kittens because she can't bear the fact of "their tiny eyes that never woke to me." So she picks up one of them and yanks its eyelids apart till they stay open. She then collapses in a fit of weeping and guilt, and—well, what would you do?—goes and does the same disgusting thing to the eyes of all the other little kittens, too.

As Michael Shnayerson noted in his profile for *Vanity Fair*, this same scene is enacted almost verbatim by the child protagonist of Mrs. Harrison's first novel, *Thicker Than Water*. So is an episode in *The Kiss* involving a trip to a museum. So is a trip to Lake Havasu and the reassembled London Bridge. So is a vignette in a gynecologist's office where the main props are blood, sheets, and a series of green plastic phalluses.

Which brings us, colored phalluses and all the rest of it quite aside, to a curious fact. Immediately after publishing *Thicker than Water*, whose grisly hallucinatory details caused more than one reviewer to speculate about the novel's autobiographical origins, the author herself said she had made it all up. *Thicker Than Water*, according to a formulation appearing in *Publisher's Weekly*, was "completely a product of her imagination." So she denied that the incest story presented in 1991 was true, then five years later reproduces the same story—"a wholesale lift," as Shnayerson puts it—as a memoir.

However coherent this tale may appear as fiction, it fails to convince as non-fiction on several counts. Leave aside all the mental and moral vagaries of its morbid, physically ravaged, ice-sucking, vise-operating and kitty-tormenting narrator. Let us posit, for the sake of argument, that she has somehow miraculously emerged from these mortal torments with all of her necessary powers somehow intact. What then of all the other characters in this book? How do they conform—or not—to anything the human reader can recognize?

Though Dad is not presented in any detail, what little we do learn of him is simply baffling. He is a fat, bespectacled middle-aged man whose "heavy man's breasts are disconcertingly visible" and whose "burning" eyes are "always bloodshot." He "always" wears his socks to bed. He does plenty of other unromantic things, too, like taking dirty pictures, collecting guns and pens, and ranting all the while about God. He is not, in short, the kind of dreamboat that a beautiful and talented junior in col-

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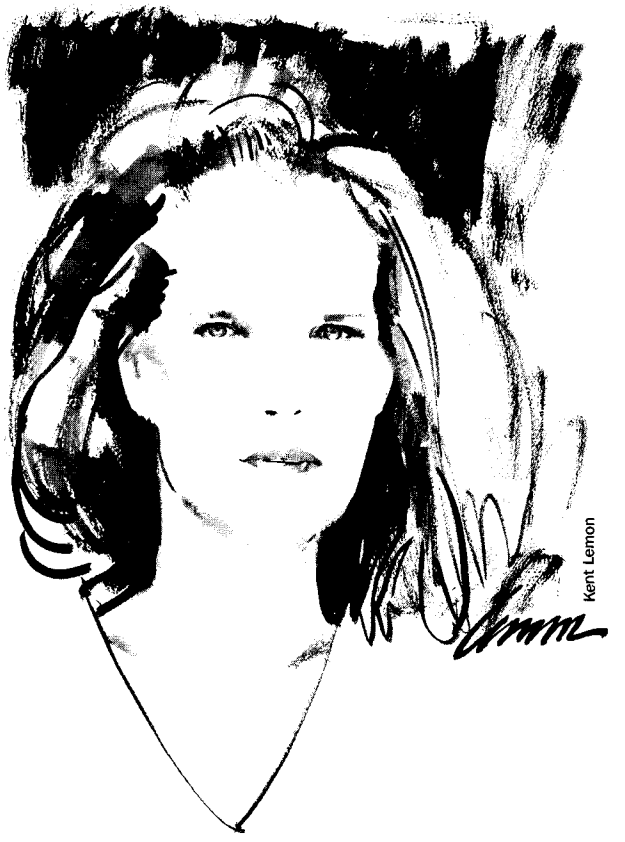
lege would sit by the phone for, with or without the added frisson of knowing all the while that he's her father. (Our narrator, by the way, is of course beautiful and talented. We know; she has other people say so all the time.)

All right, let's take that leap of faith. Let's say this particular beautiful and talented 20-year-old has a different view than most such women of what it is that makes a man enchanting. How are we to make sense of the idea that this same unappetizing man, one who moreover appears barking mad in his every appearance, works magic on the other women in his life, as well? One such is the narrator's beautiful and elusive mother, who is supposedly still smitten with him after all these years. There is also his second wife, another cipher, who is said to be helplessly in thrall to this same man.

And how about those Victorian British-Jewish grandparents who apparently raised her while her errant mother slept or disappeared? These people, we are curtly told, "have hurt me" and "still frighten me." Granny, for her part, makes a wig-flipping entrance on page 6:

> My grandmother has a talent for screaming. Her screams are not human. They tear through the veil of ordinary life . . . and in rushes every black, bleak, and barbarous thing: animals with legs caught in traps, surgery in the days that precede anesthesia, the shriek of a scalded infant, the cry of a young woman raped in the woods, the long howl of the werewolf who catches her scent, who finds and devours what's left of her.

She's a scary piece of work, this Granny of *The Kiss*. What she does when she is not howling like a banshee is not always clear, but it is clearly meant to be very, very bad. She carps, she complains, she criticizes her beautiful and talented (hereinafter, "b&t") granddaughter. She is by turns "livid," "disparaging," "controlling," and overly fond of the family fortune.



If you were Red Riding Hood and this were your grandmother, what would you do? Leave her locked in the closet and make straight for the hills? Well, here is what Kathryn Harrison did: In 1995—less than two years before *The Kiss* was published—Mrs. Harrison took her third novel, *Poison*, and . . . dedicated it to her.

And what, by the way, is wrong with her grandfather? He too is meant to be implicated by this book; indeed, it is his death that somehow kick-starts the process of "releasing" her from all that familial bondage. Grandfather's problem, in the main, is that he doesn't like being pawed by his teenage granddaughter. "When he hugged me, he didn't let our bodies touch, he made sure that my breasts and hips didn't press against him," she complains. He teaches her how to garden, helps her with her bicycle, keeps a nice Victorian roof over her head, sends her thousands of dollars when she drops out of school, and has something to do with the rounds of "school, camp, church, birthday parties, dental appointments and dance lessons" that our narrator cannot even so much as mention without shuddering. The monster!

You would think, based on what's known so far, that this particular girl would turn handsprings over a male progenitor who did things like this without even trying to pull her skirt up, wouldn't you? He certainly looks good compared to her other grandfather, the paternal one, whom she meets as an adult in the course of one of her trysts with Dad and whose first act, she notes indignantly, is to feel up her leg and make a pass. So one grandfather is faulted for not rubbing up against her, and the other one is faulted for wanting to. You might say our narrator is trying to have it both ways, grandfather-wise. And maybe even otherwise, too.

The alpha and omega of the whole twisted alphabet is of course Mom, striking and aloof, neurotic, neglectful, and above all—how many of you guessed it?—jealous of her b&t daughter. You see, the narrator does not really "want" her father; she wants her mother, or the mother-love she never had, or something like that.

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"The smell of her perfume, the glint of sun on her hair, the way that, in her small kitchen, our bodies sometimes inadvertently touch, separated by no more than the fabric of two thin nightgowns: any of these is enough to make me feel faint."

But enough of this low-rent sport. The good news is that upon the publication of Mrs. Harrison's memoir, the entire genre of the tell-all, done-all, made-for-TV confessional cash cow has reached what can only be its logical end. For years now, the public has swallowed everything and anything that our itinerant victim-prophets—suicidal, narcissistic, and delusional though they may be—have clamored to divulge. Never mind that you wouldn't leave a narrator like this one alone with the family turtle. Never mind that you wouldn't count on her to tell you without checking a calendar what day of the week it is. Your job is just to sympathize and believe.

In saying that *The Kiss* gives us no reason to do so, I mean only to observe that Mrs. Harrison has written a failed—that is to say, an unconvincing—memoir. I do not mean to suggest, as she herself once said, that she simply made the incest story up. For all we know, she actually did conduct an incestuous involvement with her father that began when she was an adult, and continued for some years. For all we know, she did these things and more. Any speculations to the contrary would be indecent. ♦

Ismail Kadare's Prize Fight

Don't Give the Nobel to an Albanian Party Hack

By Stephen Schwartz

The very existence of the Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare, given the isolation of his country from the world, has been treated as a kind of miracle. He has been praised by John Updike and championed by the *Boston Globe*, and was recently the subject of an "At Lunch With" profile in the *New York Times*. Since the mid-1980s a multinational lobby has urged that he be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In Paris, *Le Figaro Littéraire* opines, "We have said it before and we will say it again: When is Stockholm going to recognize the extraordinary caliber of this writer?" A few weeks ago, *Kirkus Reviews* welcomed his latest novel to be published in English, *The Three-Arched Bridge*, by saying, "This is a masterpiece. The Nobel can't come a moment too soon."

Ismail Kadare
The Three-Arched Bridge
Arcade, 184 pp., $21.95

With Albania beset by riots and on the verge of a society-wide breakdown, the Swedish Academy may find it an irresistible temptation to award the Nobel to Albania's only famous novelist. But it would be a grievous mistake to give it to Ismail Kadare, and not just on literary grounds.

The Three-Arched Bridge, written in 1976-78 and published in France in 1981, is in many ways a typical Kadare work: less a novel than a parable, superficially undemanding but rich in subtextual meaning, exotic, and set far in the Albanian past. Narrated by a 14th-century monk on the eve of the Turkish conquest of the Balkans, it rehashes a motif from Balkan folklore: the walling up of an innocent victim inside a building under construction, as a human sacrifice to assure the structure's completion and long survival.

One day, an unknown traveler has an epileptic fit next to a raging stretch of river served by a ferry crossing. A wandering fortune-teller claims the seizure is "a sign from the Almighty that a bridge should be built here, over these waters." As we soon find out, it is most likely a hoax, staged by a devious builder of roads. A bridge-builder arrives to design and erect a three-arched bridge, which is mysteriously damaged on several nights.

Soon a "collector of folktales" arrives to research a local ballad, which tells of three brothers who worked as masons, building a fortress in northern Albania. Each night the work they had done by day was destroyed by mysterious forces, until they decided to immure one of their wives.

After hearing several versions of this ballad, the "collector of folktales" disappears forever. Almost immediately, traveling minstrels are performing in local inns a version of the ballad that has been slightly altered. The new version proclaims that a human sacrifice will allow a bridge to withstand the onslaught of the river. The road-builders begin promising money to anyone who will be a willing victim. But these balladeers, too, are frauds. As becomes clear by the end of the book, it is the ferry company—and nothing supernatural—that has been sabotaging the bridge. The ballad merely provides a pretext for the road-builders to murder one of the ferrymen's saboteurs in order to establish control over the profitable river crossing.

The tale is authentic, simple, and

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alluring, and its pagan and brutal underpinnings seem to offer a way to understand the recent Balkan wars. What's more, it is easy to see how such a tale appeals to current politico-literary obsessions. There is a nice deconstructionist point to the way hegemonic commercial interests in the early days of capitalism hijack a people's folklore, and put it to the service of monopolistic consolidation. Kadare, then, can be seen as a capable writer lucky enough to appeal to the literary obsessions of the Western academy in a way he never intended.

But, less innocently, Kadare was also highly thought of by the political and intellectual establishment of his native land for three decades. For almost all of that time, Albania was ruled by the brutal ultranationalist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha, fabled for his last-stand Stalinist orthodoxy. During the Hoxha regime, official favor did not come without assiduous courting—or, to put it less kindly, conscious collaboration.

Kadare's first novel, *The General of the Dead Army* (1963), was translated into French in 1971 and later turned into an Italian feature film. It is the tale of an Italian army officer sent to Communist Albania to repatriate the corpses of Italian soldiers dead in World War II, and it offers a comparison—too obvious to be called subtextual—of the morbidity and decadence of fascist-capitalist Italy with the socialist vitality of Albania under Hoxha. It is merely a deft execution of the Stalinist genre of socialist realism, but it charmed the leftist youth of Italy and France, thrilled to find a product of the proletarian "Tibet of Europe" that could be called a literary work of any kind.

Many of Kadare's novels follow a heavy-handed political agenda. His *Chronicle in Stone* is an homage to Argyrocastrum, the southern Albanian town that was the birthplace of Kadare, as well as of Hoxha; the compliment to the dictator was obvious to Albanians. *The Great Winter* (1978) attacked Nikita Khrushchev, but only to exalt the unreconstructed Hoxha by comparison. While that book was one of Kadare's failures, more and more of Kadare came out in French. At one point, Hoxha, a Francophile who had been a French instructor before coming to power, shared his own translator with Kadare.

Kent Lemon

By the time Albanian communism collapsed in 1990-91, Kadare was a genuine hit in France. Almost as soon as the cracks appeared in the regime of Hoxha's anointed successor, Ramiz Alia, Kadare decamped from Albania to France, and publicly took his distance from the Communist dictatorship. Albanians offered differing explanations for this action: Some gave him the benefit of the doubt and hailed him as a born-again anti-Communist; others thought Kadare merely feared reprisals when the regime collapsed. Kadare, meanwhile, has presented himself as a longtime dissident who had walked a tightrope under communism.

It is a deceitful claim, for Kadare was in fact an approved author of the Albanian dictatorship. At the moment of his "defection," he was vice-chairman of its official political structure, the so-called Democratic Front. Kadare had originally become known in Albania as a journalist directly serving the Hoxha regime, and as a poet. His poetry is, of course, unknown to most of his foreign cheerleaders, a blessing for him, since his most famous work in verse is his cycle *What Are These Mountains Thinking?* (1962-64):

The long mountain caravans
were waiting,
Waiting for a leader,
Albania was waiting
For the Communist Party.

In other poems, widely quoted in Hoxha's Albania, Kadare wrote:

With you, the Party,
Even terrible pain
Is finer than any joy . . .

And,

There will be light.
No, the Bible *is not speaking,*
But the Party. Its roaring voice
Resounds through people's hearts like loudspeakers . . .
We, the poets of socialist realism,
Are also there,
With notebooks of verse in our pockets
Turning, there where molten steel is poured.

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Kadare also issued a number of extraordinary attacks on non-Communist Albanian and foreign culture. In his 1977 speech "The Literature of Socialist Realism Is Developing in Struggle Against Bourgeois and Revisionist Pressure," he declared,

> In their spirit, in their content, even in their style and intonation, many of the works of the present-day decadent bourgeois literature are reminiscent of the Bible, the New Testament, the Koran, the Talmud, and other tattered remnants of the Dark Ages.

This from a man who has since become famous ransacking medieval Albanian tradition for the raw material of his stories.

In the same discourse, Kadare denounced the "decadent modernism" of the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire. Why Apollinaire, of all people? Because Apollinaire. was deeply influenced by his friend the Albanian writer and patriot Faik Konica—Apollinaire even wrote his great love poem *La Chanson du mal-aimé* in Konica's house in London—and Hoxha had judged Konica to be a "reactionary."

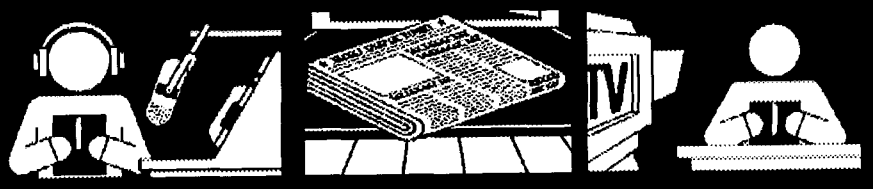
In 1988 Kadare penned a tribute to Hoxha praising the dictator as "an outstanding intellectual, and an erudite humanist." As late as 1990, he described the Albanian-American poet Arshi Pipa, an opponent of the Hoxha regime, as "diabolical . . . an absolute spy . . . an old hyena."

Many Albanian intellectuals are dismayed that a man who served communism as Kadare did might be awarded a Nobel as "Albania's greatest writer." In 1993, the Albanian dissident writer Amik Kasoruho published a survey of Kadare's work in a small Albanian-language periodical issued in Italy. Kasoruho, the son of an executed anti-Communist, himself served 10 years in Hoxha's prisons. After his release he was barred from literary activity because of his "negative family background." What Kasoruho found worst about Kadare was that he opted for such conduct when it was not "absolutely necessary." Kadare *chose* to join the chorus of Hoxha's hacks, Kasoruho emphasized.

After years of assailing the "archaic" quality of Albanian culture, Kasoruho alleged, Kadare has come to embrace it—unsurprisingly, since it lends itself so well to the entertainment of Western readers. But Kasoruho also charged that Kadare had done something far worse than merely change his literary style. He had constructed his later fictions by looting the works of non-Communist writers whose achievements and reputations he helped suppress. Kadare's *Doruntine,* for example, published in the United States in 1988, was based on a tale recorded by the outstanding Albanian folklorist Donat Kurti, who disappeared into Hoxha's prisons. *Broken April*, a novel about North Albanian blood feuds, drew on the work of Shtjefen Gjecovi, the "reactionary" Albanian scholar who died before communism came, but whose work was also attacked by the Hoxha regime and treated with contempt by Kadare.

Kadare attacked many of the great creators of Albanian literature, even though they had recorded the

Combat The Media Bias



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materials from which he has drawn such writings as *The Three-Arched Bridge*. Their names, unknown abroad, include Konica, Gjecovi, Kurti, Lazer Shantoja, and Bernardin Palaj—the last two executed by the Communists. Other Albanian authors, such as Gjergj Fishta (the national poet, who died in 1940 but whose bones were dug up by the Communists and thrown into a river) and the great émigré poet Martin Camaj, remain beloved among Albanians, but are also unknown to the mass of foreign readers today, in large part because all interest in Albanian writing was and remains absorbed by publicity for Kadare.

Kadare has attempted to make up for these offenses in various ways. In 1991, after arriving in Paris, he published a set of reflections, *Albanian Spring*, which reproduces his correspondence with Hoxha's successor Ramiz Alia, along with various self-serving jottings. In it, he mentioned "attempts to make people disappear from Albanian literature," including Konica and Fishta, as if he himself had not been one of the main individuals responsible for such "disappearances."

Nobody should underestimate the pressures Kadare faced as a writer under the Hoxha regime, or deny him the right to reinvent himself in the aftermath of communism's fall. But to leap from understanding to wholesale absolution for his past—and even strident calls that he be crowned with the world's greatest literary honor—involves something other than the rights of the author.

Kadare's appeal comes largely from his exoticism. To call him exotic is only to say that Albania's other great writers remain a closed book to readers in the West. And if that's the case, it's at least partly due to the help that Kadare gave the Hoxha government in suppressing them.

Someone in Sweden ought to know that. ♦

BLACK LIKE THEM

An American Journalist Disgusted with Africa

By Sousa Jamba

I once asked Dennis Hills, a British writer who had been imprisoned by Idi Amin, how he had felt when he discovered bodies floating in rivers in the interior of Uganda. Hills said he had not been shocked: He knew such cruelties were common in human history. But in Africa they are shockingly common, as the *Washington Post*'s Hong Kong bureau chief Keith Richburg recounts in *Out of America*. Three years ago, while chief of the *Post*'s Africa bureau, Richburg himself stood on the Tanzania-Rwanda border and counted hundreds of bodies floating downstream from the latest massacre in the Rwandan civil war. Such philosophical detachment as Hills expressed proved unavailable to Richburg. What went through Richburg's mind was not any meditation about the persistence of human cruelty but the thought that he, too, could have been one of those bodies, if not for the accident of the African slave trade.

Keith B. Richburg
Out of America
A Black Man Confronts Africa
Basic (New Republic), 257 pp., $24

For Richburg is a black American writer—and one who does not think much of the continent of his ancestors. He is not the first black American to have strayed from the party line on Africa: Eddy Harris recounted his travels across the continent in *Native Stranger* (1993), and was excoriated by fellow black intellectuals for reporting unpleasant truths. But that doesn't mean that Richburg has not had to be very brave in writing this book.

Sousa Jamba is an Angolan novelist living in London.

If Richburg's anger clouds his judgment at times, it is hard not to forgive him. His tour in Africa (1991-94) made him witness to two of the worst African horrors of our times: the Somali clan wars and the Rwandan genocide. Wandering among trigger-happy militias in Mogadishu, Richburg wound up fearing for his life, as he was often taken for a Somali. An American army truck driver even passed him when he was hitchhiking. At a rally for the warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed, a red-eyed militiaman, also assuming Richburg was a Somali, knocked him down with a Kalashnikov. Even in Rwanda, where Richburg traveled before the genocidal Hutu government was forced to flee Zaire, his primary concern was to prove to the bullies in sunglasses working the roadblocks that he was not a Tutsi but a black American.

Richburg says he often felt Africans were suspicious of him because he did not belong to a tribe, and that many expected him to take sides in the tribal disputes. This may be true, but Richburg should have noted that lack of tribe can play in one's favor. Belonging to a tribe is a condition many educated Africans find embarrassing. To them, Richburg's tribe-free status would be ideal; after all, here was a man who could claim the whole continent as his home. A black American is the perfect Pan-Africanist.

In fact, it is common for urban Kenyans, Zambians, and Nigerians, in trying to look fashionable, to pretend they are American blacks. This

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"Americanization" of Africa's cities is something Richburg fails to take sufficient note of, even though he himself was occasionally mistaken for an African pretending to be an American.

Africans have always expected visiting American blacks to wax lyrical about the continent. That Americans generally fulfill expectations is not surprising: Many arrive as dignitaries, and are received by the ruling elites with much fanfare. Richburg recounts a conference of African-American leaders and African politicians in Gabon, where Douglas Wilder, Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, and Louis Farrakhan broke into applause when the 27-year-old Sierra Leonean dictator Valentine Strasser strutted into the room, decked out in military fatigues and Ray-Bans.

"These black Americans" writes Richburg, "were obviously more impressed with the macho military image Strasser cut than with the fact that he represents all that is wrong with Africa—military thugs who take power and thwart the continent's fledgling efforts to move toward democracy."

As Richburg delves into the forces stirring the ethnic hatreds in Rwanda, he draws parallels with the Detroit of his childhood, where light-skinned blacks looked down on darker ones. Here Richburg strikes a rare false note. Snobbery in Detroit is hardly comparable to ethnic rivalry in Africa. Although dark-skinned blacks in Detroit might envy their light-skinned neighbors, it is hardly imaginable that they would one day pick up machetes made in China to hack off their legs.

Richburg naturally asks why Africa continues to lag behind, while certain Asian countries, just as deeply mired in Third World poverty only decades ago, lurch forward. It cannot be mere colonialism, which both regions experienced. It cannot be only ethnic strife, for prosperous Indonesia has that, too. The most direct answer Richburg gets comes from Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, who asserts that Africans lack self-discipline. But Richburg notes, too, the nature of African corruption. A corrupt Asian given money to construct a highway may insist on a cut once it is completed; a corrupt African leader will forget about the road altogether and deposit all the money in a private account in Europe.

There is also the nature of African violence. Richburg bewails the passivity of the African masses and wonders why, in the face of such brutal regimes, ordinary Africans do not rise against their governments. The answer is held in the observations Richburg makes on almost every page: African authorities are not in the habit of counting bodies.

After witnessing carnage and despair all over the continent, Richburg fetches up on Goree Island in Senegal, the main African slave port of the 18th century. There he begins to feel he is lucky that his ancestors were transported off the wretched continent:

> And why should I feel anything more? Because my skin is black? Because some ancestor of mine, four centuries ago, was wrenched from this place and sent to America, and because I now look like those others whose ancestors were left behind? Does that make me still a part of this place? Should their suffering now somehow still be mine? Maybe I would care more if I had never come here, and never seen what Africa is today. But I have been here, and I have seen—and frankly, I want no part of it.

I must admit I can imagine a white racist living in Africa chuckling with glee at this passage. But I can imagine considerably more black Africans who will applaud Richburg's courage and candor. ♦

MULLAH'S LITTLE HELPER

The Paranoid Style in Middle Eastern Politics

By Lawrence F. Kaplan

Daniel Pipes
The Hidden Hand
Middle East Fears of Conspiracy
St. Martin's Press, 404 pp., $45

At different times, the European right, the Latin American left and even groups at the margins of American politics have fallen under the sway of conspiracy theories. But today it is the Middle East that provides the world's most fertile ground for fears of covert plots. Scholarly works on the region seldom acknowledge the prevalence of such theories—area specialists, after all, have a hard time owning up to the seamier side of their chosen corner of the globe—but anyone who has spent much time in an Arab country can attest to their ubiquity.

The grip these claims have on the imagination of so many in the Islamic world is by no means a trivial issue. According to Daniel Pipes, the editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*, Arab and Iranian fears of conspiracy

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"help explain much of what would otherwise seem illogical or implausible, including the region's record of political extremism and volatility, its culture of violence, and its poor record of modernization." In his meticulously researched book *The Hidden Hand*, Pipes explains why the Middle East has proved so rife with conspiracy theories, and what the stakes are for the West.

The first two thirds of *The Hidden Hand* is a no-frills catalogue of the region's most popular "plots." One theory has Israel selectively depleting the ozone layer over Arab countries. Another blames traffic jams on the "handiwork of American agents." After Iran's soccer team loses an important match, an Iranian newspaper complains that:

> the teams in this series of games were chosen in such a way as to facilitate the victory of the Iraqi team with the defeat of the Guinean national team. . . . This indicates a premeditated plan aimed at ensuring Iraq's superiority in this series of games and at belittling Iran's Islamic Revolution.

Similarly, suffering from a particularly acute bout of paranoia, Iraqi officials become convinced that Coca-Cola is an imperialist cancer—an epiphany for which the unfortunate president and general manager of the Iraqi Coke franchise pay with their lives.

Though the bogeyman that haunts Middle Eastern politicians often carries a British or American passport, his true allegiance usually lies with "the Zionists." Islamic conspiracy theorists invariably identify the source of their troubles as a tool of the Jews or, better yet, as a Jew himself. Thus, while Yasser Arafat, Leonid Brezhnev, Kemal Atatürk, and Lyndon Johnson may not appear to have much in common, in the mind of the conspiracy theorist they all stand accused of having been bar-mitzvahed.

The anti-Semitic content of so many Middle East conspiracy theories highlights an irony: that their conception is neither Muslim nor Middle Eastern, but distinctly Christian and European. Indeed, until this century, the Arab attitude towards Jews was, if not particularly hospitable, at least far more generous than the prevailing sentiment in Europe. With the creation of the state of Israel, however, all this changed. "Just as anti-Semitic and anti-secret society ideas fell out of the European mainstream, they gained strength in Muslim lands," writes Pipes. "Europe's phobias of a century back persist there, as if preserved in amber."

THE TRUTH IS MORE HURTFUL THAN ANYTHING A CONSPIRACY THEORIST COULD DREAM UP.

Why have these phobias taken such hold in the Islamic world? The standard explanation attributes their persistent popularity to the Machiavellian imperatives of Middle Eastern political elites, who hope to channel the more volatile energies of their constituents away from the palace gates. Pipes, however, is not fully satisfied with this interpretation. As he observes, many conspiracy theories bubble up rather than down, and several of the region's despots seem sincerely to believe their own tales of persecution. A more likely source of this paranoid style lies in a sentiment expressed by an official at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem: "Before, we were masters of the world, and now, we're not even masters of our own mosques!" Faced with failure upon failure—military, economic, and social—inhabitants of the region have embraced conspiratorial claims as a way of accounting for their seemingly inexplicable bad luck.

By attributing all manner of misdeeds to a "massively competent, forever plotting cabal," the conspiracy theorist not only lets his own government off the hook but also induces a sense of hopelessness in those credulous enough to subscribe to such notions. Such despair leads to passivity and irresponsibility, impeding efforts at modernization and political reform in a region desperately in need of both.

But Middle East conspiracy theories are our problem as well. As Pipes observes, those willing to subscribe to these preposterous claims are "unbound by mere facts." Conspiracy theorists often have trouble distinguishing citizens of the United States and Israel from their "Satanic" governments.

Consequently, some of those convinced of the collective guilt of Westerners developed an unhealthy penchant for targeting innocents in terrorist attacks. How the much-discussed spirit of cooperation envisioned for the New Middle East can co-exist with such beliefs is something students of the region would do well to consider.

Is an omnipotent West intent on subordinating the Islamic world? On the contrary: As our country's preeminent Middle East watcher recently told a stunned audience of Arab intellectuals, most Americans "don't give a flying f—k" about the region. In fact, Western governments lack either the discretion or the will to execute even the most credible-sounding of the alleged plots. This truth about American feelings towards the Middle East is more modest, and yet doubtless more hurtful to the area's self-important elite than anything a conspiracy theorist could dream up. Not that that will matter to those who imagine they occupy our every waking thought. ♦

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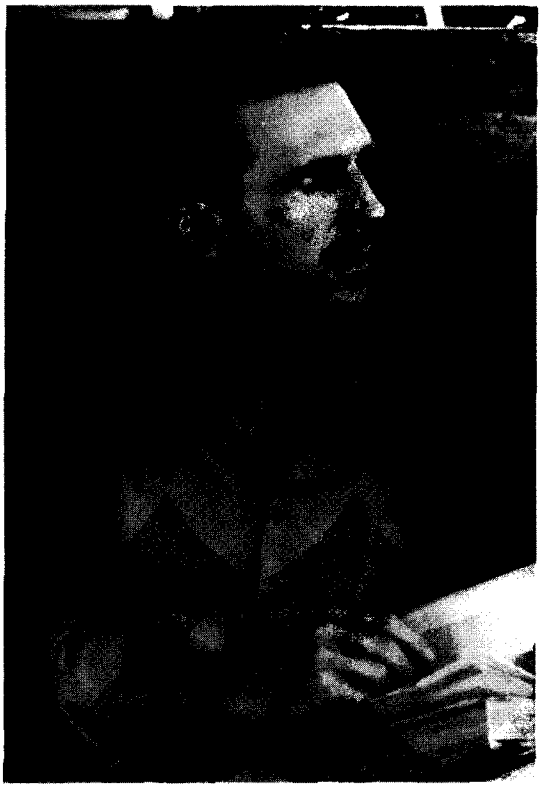

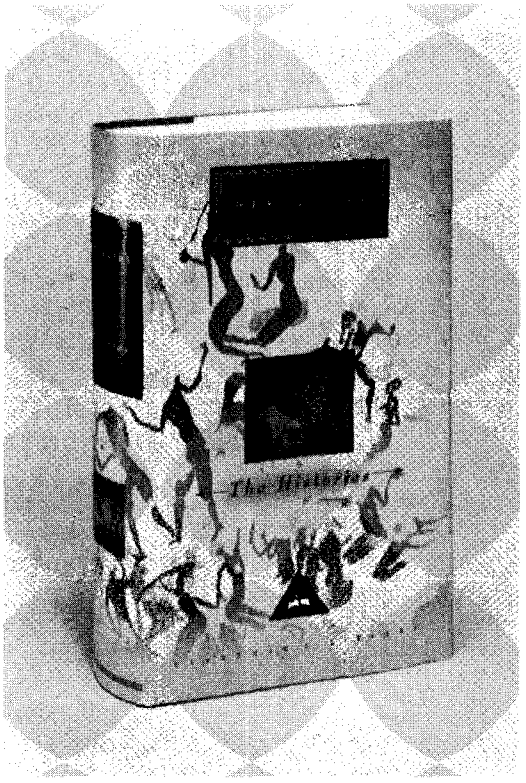

THE BOOK THAT'S THE TALK OF MOVIE-GOERS EVERYWHERE

Knopf to publish book featured in the award-winning film, "The English Patient"

Based on the tremendous critical and box-office success of "The English Patient"—winner of the Golden Globe Award for Best Picture and nominated for 12 Academy Awards—Knopf has announced that it will publish a hardcover edition of the book that figures prominently in the film, *The Histories* by Herodotus.

Regarded as the father of historical writing and one of the world's most compelling storytellers, Herodotus is revered for his ability to portray the intricate human entanglements at the core of great historical events—such as the tale of Gyges, who murders the king of Lydia and usurps his throne and his marriage bed, bringing about war with the Persians generations later.

Herodotus's *The Histories* ($23) will be published April 3rd, as part of Knopf's Everyman's Library series of the world's hardcover classics. The book will include an introduction by the noted scholar, Roslind Thomas, and will feature a full-color jacket reminiscent of the Cave of Swimmers scene from the movie.

Knopf is not only the publisher of *The Histories*. In 1992, the house published *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje, the widely acclaimed novel on which the Miramax film is based. The book is currently a national bestseller in paperback from Knopf's sister imprint, Vintage Books.

Photo of Ralph Fiennes, as Count Almásy, holding his copy of Herotodus © 1996 by Miramax Films Corp.

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Consumer choice and market competition are prized American values. Today, through scores of state-based reforms, the benefits of market competition are being extended to millions of electricity consumers. In just the last year, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, California and Michigan have embraced such reforms...with many other states soon to follow.

For American conservatives this is the best of all possible developments. Competition flourishes and consumer choice is expanded ...without the heavy-handed "one-size-fits-all" intrusions of the government in Washington.

In the rush to promote electricity rate competition, Congress should yield to state-based reforms...rather than short circuit them! Federal mandates and preemptions will trample these innovations and tread on long-standing state prerogatives. Let these state-based reforms surge...without meddlesome Washington interference.

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Alabama Family Alliance
Birmingham, AL

David A. Keene
American Conservative Union
Alexandria, VA

Mike Watson
Arkansas Public Policy Foundation
Little Rock, AR

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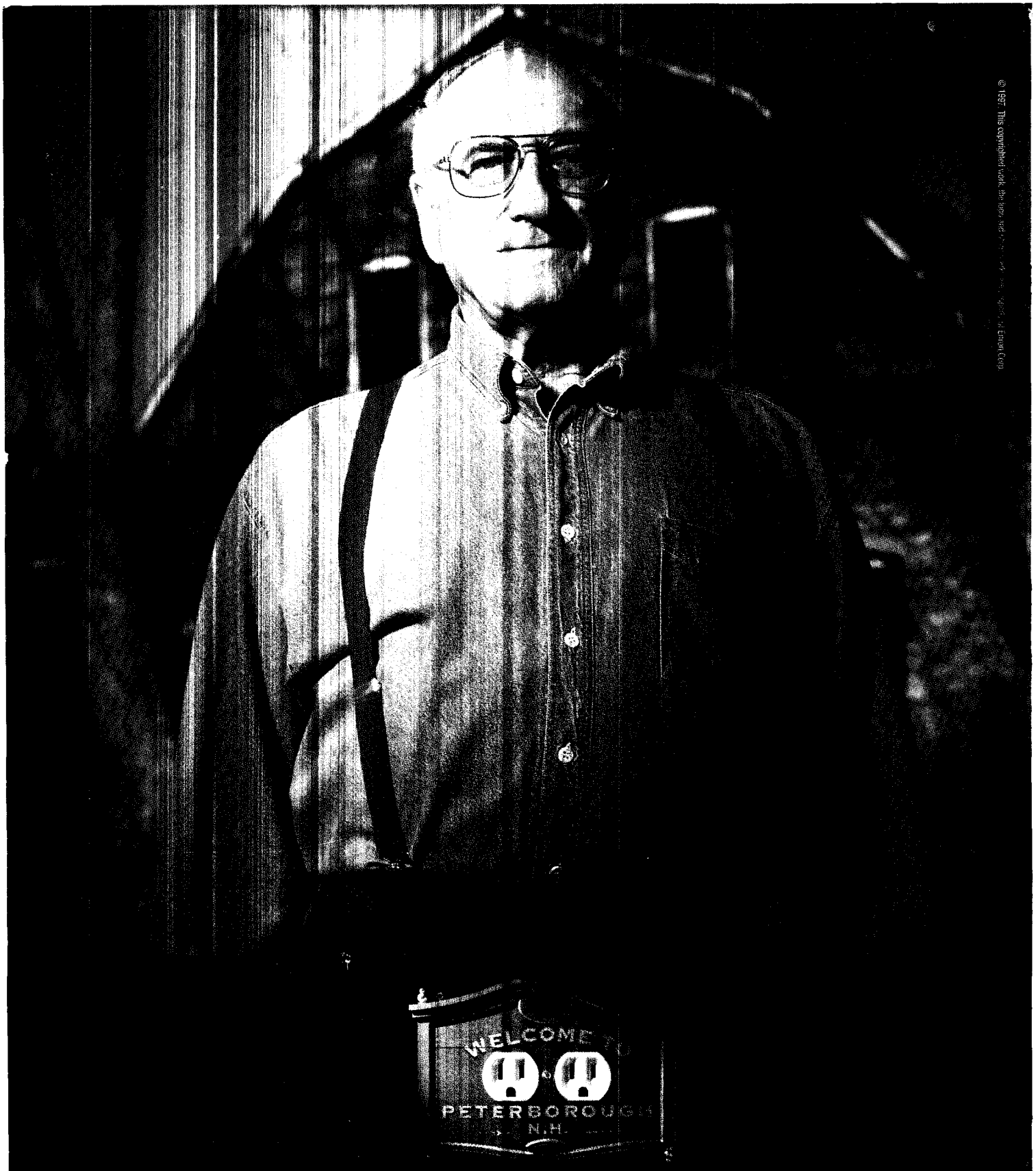

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